

The Other Shoe – Chapter 1

I could see he was bleeding; badly if I were any judge. Blood was pooling around his shoulder, neck and down his side.

BLAM.

Now he would stop bleeding.

“You can’t do that!”

“I most surely can, I just did it.”

“I meant you shouldn’t do that.”

“Why not?”

“He was bleeding to death.”

“So? Turn him over and check his right hand.”

“What’s this?”

“I think it’s a Glock 30; a compact .45ACP.”

“Did you see the gun?”

“No I didn’t. I did see him move his hand to the small of his back. Awful strange place for a first aid kit, wouldn’t you say?”

“Hank, I’m out of here. From now on, you’re on your own.”

Randy turned on his heel and walked down the lane. I figured I’d never see him again. That was fine with me; it would extend the supplies I had cached.

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Let’s see if I can explain how we got to where we are. I should probably start off by telling we didn’t have WW III, yet, although it was close. None of the calderas blew up that I know of. Most of it started in the good old US of A and then inexorably spread. Remember the housing meltdown back in 2007 and 2008? It resulted in chaos in the markets with investment banks falling like flies. Even that big insurance company, AIG, needed an \$85 billion bailout.

Bush had a plan, or claimed his Secretary of Treasury, Paulson, did. Pundits early on suggested that the plan could run one TRILLION dollars. Do you know what 1 trillion

dollars look like? \$1,000,000,000,000. A dozen zeros and despite the book about the Gilbreth family, they aren't cheaper by the dozen. The day the plan was announced, the DJIA recovered almost 400 points, although it was down for the week. A friend wrote and asked why everyone was happy with the market well below its all-time high. I wrote back (email) that the market had been over priced and shouldn't be more than \$12,500-\$13,000 at its high. When I was younger, I remember dad talking about the DJIA being \$914 and everyone was happy. The same day, Congress said just buying up the bad mortgages would run \$700 billion, initially.

World markets all responded to the announcement. One headline said,

(Reuters) – European shares surged on Friday to their biggest one-day percentage gain on record, as battered banks and insurers gained thanks to temporary bans on short sales of financial stocks and the US government's moves to end the credit crisis. The problem with the plan was someone had to pay for it. To paraphrase Everett Dickson: "A trillion here, a trillion there; pretty soon you talking about real money." I'll bet he was rolling over in his grave.

The announcement of the plan was the beginning. For a while, everything seemed to be working. Both the US and foreign economies improved, crude oil rose to around \$110-\$115 and stayed there. The hike in gas prices attributed to Ike went away as the refineries reopened. With Congress approving offshore drilling, our available gas and oil would eventually force the Middle Eastern countries to charge a reasonable price. Venezuela cut us off completely when Russia stationed four TU-160 White Swans there.

The election ultimately turned on the Vice-Presidential candidates and Sarah was beaten by Joe. I don't know why we bother with elections anymore; just let the SCOTUS decide them. I worked as a warehouseman for Costco, driving a forklift and moving pallets of goods here and there. I made a decent living and, being single, had managed to put a little away every payday since I'd been hired a few years back. It was my version of a retirement plan and after reading some PAW fiction, I bought gold coins at the rate of one per month or longer if it was a larger denomination coin or a roll of junk silver.

Petraeus had overall control of the war on terror as the Commander of CENTCOM. The War on Terror remained very unpopular at home. However, Osama Obama supported it and agreed with Petraeus's overall assessment to wait until mid-2009 before beginning a major drawdown from Iraq. More troops were sent to Afghanistan to try and get a handle on that conflict. If the Russians couldn't defeat Afghanistan, what made anyone think that we could?

That's when I began to realize that we had a major problem. We were paying for the War on Terror and trying to bail out all the dummies on Wall Street. I had the cheapest apartment available in our city and it wasn't in a very good neighborhood. There was food stacked to the ceiling in my bedroom and living room, mostly bought from Costco. I had double and sometimes triple bought as long as I'd worked there. It got to the point

where I calculated I had a two year supply and just purchased to replace what I used up.

That started around 2004, I think, maybe early 2005. My next task was putting together an armory so I could protect the food I had and my person. I had it in mind to buy a Springfield Armory M1A, either a Loaded or a Super Match. I also looked at the PTR 91F and some of their other models. Being an American, I found the M1A more to my liking because it looked more like an American rifle. I started to save for the rifle, a shotgun and a pistol. I'd already decided on the Mossberg 590A1 shotgun and a Taurus PT1911 pistol. I'm only 32 and in pretty good condition so having a rifle heavier than the Mattel toy gun wouldn't be a problem.

I saved \$20 per week and in early 2008, I had the money for the Super Match, the Mossberg 590A1 and the PT1911. Although I didn't have any firearms before, it hadn't kept me from buying ammo, a little at a time. By the time I bought my guns, I had 4,000 rounds of 168gr Match BTHP and 1,000 rounds 165gr BTSP Black Hills ammo. A person wouldn't want to shoot surplus ammo in a \$2,800 rifle.

I also had 1,000 rounds of Lawman .45ACP FMJ and 500 rounds of Gold Dot .45ACP HP for the pistol and an assortment of shotgun ammo. The shotgun ammo included a case of Brenneke slugs and a case of 00 8-pellet reduced recoil Buckshot. I had five of the Chinese T-57 mags for the rifle and 4 spare 8 round magazines for the pistol. I heard of a source where I could get USGI 20 round M14 magazines and was saving my money for those.

I suppose I, like everyone who owns firearms, believe you can never own too many and the ones you have could always stand improvement. What I had in mind was to put a good variable power scope on the rifle using A.R.M.S. mounts. Costco started to cut back the number of employees in each store. Since I was nowhere near the highest paid, I wasn't too worried, at first.

No story is complete, from what I've read, without discussing your Bug Out Vehicle. I had an older Chevy pickup that had the motor replaced before I'd bought it. It was an ordinary looking $\frac{3}{4}$ ton Chevy pickup with a couple of additions. First, the original engine had thrown a rod and had been replaced by a diesel, back before they used electronics on diesel engines. Second, the previous owner had added a second underbody fuel tank plus a 98 gallon cross bed tank. I never tested how far I could go on one load of fuel, but it had to be a long ways with the 170 available gallons. The only thing I did besides changing the oil and getting the truck lubed was to add a topper and buy a used trailer I could pull with the pickup.

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I've mentioned reading PAW fiction because I like those websites and had 3 I visited regularly. I didn't consider myself to be a prepper or survivalist. However, the more I read, the more I realized that it was a good description of the attitude I had. Between

when I bought my guns and when the government saved the economy, I'd completed my magazine purchases, had the scope installed, purchased LBE and had my food packed in totes ready to load into the truck and trailer. I worried less about the economy than I did about North Korean and Iran's nuclear ambitions, Russia's invasion of Georgia than that Chavez down in Venezuela. We didn't need to import problems; we had enough at home plus those Mexican drug cartels who didn't care who they shot.

Anyway, once I had my preps in order and had my food supply topped off, I started saving money again, just in case. Someone I once knew, I can't remember who, said that you should have savings equal to a minimum of three months wages. He called it his *kiss my butt* money. At that point, I was torn between putting the savings in gold or just accumulating cash. I decided on the latter, in a PAW, gold wouldn't be traded initially and it would be cash only for a time.

I had the tiniest bit of a gut and cut back on what I ate for two reasons. First, to lose the gut and second to save the extra money I'd been spending on food. There were also other things I began to believe I needed to have, like a grain mill, a good water filter plus a cast iron frying pan and pot and maybe a grill to lay over a fire pit. Maybe I'd better get a single bit axe and a bow saw to cut up firewood. Now, if I had a place to bug out to, I'd be thinking differently, like getting a chainsaw, etc. Axes scared me, but not as much as chainsaws. I didn't plan on doing much digging and my WW II surplus entrenching tool would work just fine. It was an Entrenching Tool, M1943 with cover.

We made it to July just fine and Petraeus and Osama Obama began a drawdown of troops in Iraq, holding the number in Afghanistan. It had been decided to withdraw 20% of the troops per quarter meaning that the drawdown would be complete by the end of the third quarter of 2010. Only then would consideration be given to withdrawing our troops from Afghanistan. The Democrats controlled Congress, but lacked 60 seats.

SYDNEY (AFP) – The world is on the brink of an avalanche in the spread of devastating weaponry, a new global non-proliferation group warned Tuesday, saying that a nuclear incident would dwarf the September 11 attacks.

The Middle East, particularly Iran, is a potential tipping point, according to Gareth Evans, co-chair of the newly formed International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

Evans, a former Australia foreign minister, said the world had been "sleepwalking" on the issue of atomic weapons for a decade.

"The devastation that could be wreaked by one major nuclear weapons incident alone puts 9/11 and almost everything else (in) to the category of the insignificant," he said, referring to the attacks inflicted on the United States in 2001.

Evans was speaking as the commission, which was first proposed by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd after a visit to the Japanese city of Hiroshima in June, entered the second and final day of its inaugural meeting in Sydney.

The group, chaired by Evans and Japan's former top diplomat Yoriko Kawaguchi, is tasked with reinvigorating the global debate on the spread of nuclear weapons and disarmament.

Evans told reporters there were between 13,000 and 16,000 nuclear warheads actively deployed around the world and that it was "really a bit of a miracle" that a nuclear catastrophe had not occurred during the Cold War or afterwards.

"But unless we energize ourselves, unless we re-invigorate a high level political debate which is then accompanied by effective action, we potentially have very alarming consequences staring us in the face," he said.

"We are on the brink of... an avalanche or a cascade of proliferation unless we are very, very careful indeed and find ways collectively to hold the line."

Evans, Australia's foreign minister from 1988 to 1996, said the world had failed to address the rise of nuclear-armed India and Pakistan and the assumption that Israel also possesses such weapons.

But he pointed to the Middle East as a key area of concern.

"If there is a breakout by Iran, or a perceived breakout by Iran, the Middle East alone is the cockpit in which we can anticipate such a cascade of proliferation by a number of other countries," he said.

A change in leadership in the US, however, may provide a breakthrough in international talks, before comparing possible changes under Republican candidate John McCain and Democratic candidate Barack Obama.

"An Obama administration would, on the face of it... be one that's likely to be more substantially focused on this but even with a McCain administration, it would be an improvement," said Evans. "There's not much to beat frankly."

He said if the US were to sign up to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty the implications would be "quite profound" and could lead to China finding itself under "irresistible pressure" to do likewise.

"That in turn would, I think, have ripple effects right throughout the international community," he added.

The commission, whose members include former US secretary of defense William Perry and Norway's former prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, is working towards building

consensus ahead of a 2010 conference on the 40-year-old Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

China had so many profits from nearly every country in the world that it decided to call in some of the debt. They made the announcement on Labor Day, 2009. Some markets reacted and others didn't. Ours didn't because they were closed for the day. European markets fell, but not dramatically. When Wall Street opened on Tuesday, the DJIA fell \$507. Automatic controls suspended trading when the market reached -\$500 down but there were a slew of unprocessed transactions.

We were busy all day as everyone who belonged hurried in to top off their food supplies. I worked well past the time I usually got off just to move pallets down to fill the holes. We sold out of coffee, sugar, flour, tea and all kinds of canned goods. We also sold out on beans and rice. It would take a day, possibly two to restock the shelves. The one non-food category that sold out was Charmin and the house brand of bathroom tissue.

The next day (Wednesday) we opened to a hostile group of people who were disappointed with our remaining stock. The manager gave up and posted a sign that said **A shipment is on the way**. Every store has a storage area that the trucks are unloaded into. It's not open to the public, including members. That didn't stop them from forcing their way into the area, only to see a lot of empty floor space. I think that that may have made them angrier. The store was closed at 3pm because of the rowdy crowds. The truck was delayed and we didn't open on Thursday.

It came in around 4pm on Thursday afternoon and I stayed late restocking shelves. The driver told the manager that a second truck was being dispatched to each of the stores with more of the things we'd run out of. They knew what it was because of the computerized cash registers.

Friday wasn't quite the mad rush Tuesday had been and we got low on some things, but didn't run out. I took time after work to buy the things I needed to fill in my supplies. I even bought a few things I didn't usually get like 100# of flour, 25# of sugar, Crisco, 50# of rice, 50# of pintos, a bag of salt, cans of Kirkland beef and chicken, Spam, tuna, pasta, sauces, green beans, corn, diced tomatoes, two boxes of tea bags and 12 57oz cans of coffee.

It was my Saturday to work and the second truck came in early so I helped unload it and we stocked shelves until the store opened. I spent my break time buying ground beef, bacon, butter and other perishable goods and put them in the cooler in my pickup with a bag of ice. At lunchtime, I ran home and put the stuff in the refrigerator. We worked late again because while we opened later on Sundays, since we always had the after church crowd.

I didn't work Sunday and went over my preps. I did an inventory and I was full up, except... I lived in an apartment and we'd had three power outages this summer and I now

had quite a bit of meat to protect. I checked the Honda website and learned, "If you want a generator for home standby, for example, if you want to run your refrigerator, you'll need at least 2,500 watts or more. And if you want to use a transfer switch so that power can go directly into your home, you'll want a generator with at least 3000 watts. You'll also need to consider the maximum and rated power of the generator. This is important depending on what items you want to run off of your generator. Items such as toaster, lamps, and coffee makers are resistive, or constant loads and their total load can be calculated at amps \times 1. Items such as saws and drills are reactive loads and while the running load may be small, the starting load should be calculated at running amps \times 3. Remember, after the initial start less power is required for actual operation."

The Honda was about the quietest generator I knew of and they were available locally. I selected the Honda EU2000iA Camo which was very quiet, had enough power for my refrigerator and ran up to 15 hours on 1 gallon of fuel. At full power, it only used $\frac{1}{4}$ gallon per hour. A couple of gas cans and I'd be set. When I got off work on Monday I bought the generator and 2 5-gallon metal gas cans. I'd have to store those in my truck, plus I also filled the tank on the generator. If I needed to use it, I planned to set it on the balcony of my apartment and close the door. The generator really ate into my *kiss my butt* money, but that was what it was for.

According to the website, a refrigerator needed 600 watts or about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the power the generator put out. I was hoping I could get about 12 hours of run time if I needed to use it. The next day on the way home, I bought a smaller 2 gallon gas can so nobody would see me bringing in the big can and I could hide it in a paper bag if necessary. How loud is 59db? The closest I could come was Normal conversation: 60 dB(A). I figured it being on the balcony would cut the sound down to the point where it wouldn't disturb anyone's sleep.

I found the cast iron I wanted at a garage sale and the pot (a dutch oven) and pan were both well-seasoned. The grate I needed came from an old charcoal grill. One day at work one of the guys who I knew was hard up asked me if I'd be interest in buying a rifle. I asked what kind and learned it was a nearly pristine Winchester model 62A, a pump action. He wanted \$150 cash for the rifle. He brought the rifle in the next day and I determined that it was a pre-war model 62 in excellent condition. I asked if he was sure of the price and he said yes. I peeled off 7 twenties and a ten. Now I had more ammo to buy, a few bricks of .22 LR solid and hollow point, I bought 5 bricks of each from Wally World as a starter.

Some things occasionally popped as a bargain and others commanded full price. Without a wife and kids to worry about or try to convince, I was pretty much a free agent so long as I had some cash. One Sunday when I had nothing else to do, I stacked the totes in the living room and measured. Everything I had would fit into the pickup and trailer, including my camping gear with a little room left over. With that in mind, I bought more of the metal gas cans, filled them and stabilized the diesel with PRI-D. West Marine was the only local source for PRI-G/D and they really gouged, charging over \$20 a pint. I started shopping the net and found a source in Oregon that had it for \$85 a gallon, ap-

proximately \$10 a pint. I order two gallons, One of PRI-G and one of PRI-D so I had all my bases covered.

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Thinking I had most of my basis covered, I began considering where I might bug out to if push came to shove. I considered my first choice a national or state park but realized that was just too obvious, everyone else might have the same thought. Then, a story I read led me in a different direction. It was by Jerry D Young and titled *The Hermit*. A cave in the Ozarks? I was close to the Ozarks already. I went back and reread the story. The main difference between the guy in the story and me was that he had money, lots of money.

On-the-other-hand my preps were essentially completed. I'd need some LTS food, a good source of water and a cave. There were caves in just about every limestone outcropping in the Ozarks and the first thing I'd need to do was find a cave with an available source of water. The apartment was furnished and I had little of my own beside the pickup, trailer and preps. My old black and white TV was on its last legs and I might just leave it for the next tenant. I had an old Hallicrafters ham receiver but not the license or a transceiver. I could run a dipole antenna for the radio once I found a place.

I started checking newspaper ads hoping someone had a small place, meeting my requirements, for sale cheap. That continued until the following fall when the last troops were returning from Iraq. I finally gave in and contacted a realtor. He was surprised when I told him what I wanted, 5 acres or less with available water and cave. When I mention a cave he gave me a rather strange look and muttered something under his breath.

"We've been getting a lot of requests for property with caves, but never for one so small. Are you sure 5 acres will be enough?"

"There is just me and I sort of want to get back to basics."

"I know one place that's been on the market for 3 years. Most didn't like it because the property was too small and a couple didn't like it because the cave was too small."

"Can we look at it?"

"Got a flashlight?"

"Sure do."

We drove to the site. It was well off the beaten path and the road was in serious need of maintenance.

"This is just a fire road and they make one pass about every three years. Turn in that driveway up there on your right."

"Gottcha."

"This is the beginning of the property. It extends up to that limestone cliff at the back. It's nearly square and surveyed out to a shade over 6 acres."

"Why is it on the market?"

"Some prepper bought it for a bug out place, but he died before he did anything to improve the property. His wife and kids didn't see eye to eye with him and they're anxious to sell it."

"Asking price?"

"They're down to \$3,600, just what he paid for it."

"Can you show me the cave?"

"I'll show you but I won't go in, there could be snakes."

"What kinds of snakes?"

"Rattlesnakes, cottonmouth and copperhead."

"Ok, I'll keep my eyes open."

The was a slab of limestone leaning against the cliff and behind it, a narrow passage maybe 3' wide that led to the cave's entrance. I turned on my 6 cell Maglite and moved in slowly, checking everywhere for snakes. Just inside the entrance the cave opened up to a medium sized room with a passage at the rear that opened, about 5' later, into to a large room with 15' ceiling, walls about 20' wide and it was 10 paces long, about 25'. There was nothing to indicate a snake had ever been there, no shed skins or anything.

"Ok, where the water?"

"It's down the slope on the right side of the property. The stream indicates the property line on this side. There is an old rusted fence on the other side."

"Think they'd consider a counter offer?"

"I doubt it, they've had several. They just want their investment back."

"What about a well?"

“There is no well, but the property on the other side of the stream has one so there’s probably water down there somewhere.”

“Ok, this might just work. I’m not wealthy and \$3,600 would be my limit if I defer the well and the septic.”

“There is a new septic system. The tank and the drain field were installed but he died before he could dig a well or set up a home.”

“Where’s the intake?”

“See that stake over there? That’s the end of the line from the planned house to the septic.”

“You doing this pro bono”

“In a matter of speaking yes, I’m related to the family trying to unload this white elephant.”

“Fill out the papers and I’ll sign. If they accept I’ll mail a cashier’s check and you can push it through escrow.”

Would have been better if he got the well drilled before he died, but he didn’t so I’d have to live without one for now.

The papers came in Monday’s mail and appeared to have the proper endorsements. I went to the bank and cleaned out my last \$3,600 paying the fee for the cashier’s check out of pocket. I mailed it in the return envelope he thoughtfully provided. A week later, I received the recorded deed and I was now the proud owner of 6+ acres in the Ozarks.

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Things settled for a while, the markets stopped their wild swings and began a slow, but steady, growth. We were better off than many countries around the world, big players, not the third world countries. The price of gas settled in around \$3.75 a gallon locally and diesel was around \$4.30. On weekends, I’d drive down to my property and work to improve the cave. Whatever had cut the limestone to form the cave had dried up or changed directions. It remained dry as a bone even during a heavy rainstorm.

I decided to move all my LTS and half of my other food down there and store it in the second, larger, chamber. I also posted the property. The Costco where I worked was just northwest of St. Louis in St. Peters and it was a 3-4 hour drive down to my property. I didn’t go every weekend because I was working on replacing my *kiss my butt* money. One weekend I practiced and I could load everything I wanted to take in 2 hours. That was way too long so I went through the stuff again and loaded the trailer permanently, cutting the load time to 45 minutes.

The Other Shoe – Chapter 2

About mid-September 2009, we lost power for two days and I ran the Honda on the balcony with no one the wiser. I was using a heavy duty extension cord, 10 gauge I think. I used 4 gallons of gas plus one gallon to refill the tank when I shut it down. I refilled the gas can with 9.25ml of PRI-G and 5 gallons of 87 octane.

Around that time we had another run on groceries, worse than the last time. I didn't see anything in the news that would account for the panic buying. I missed an article on Bloomberg about a looming problem for the markets. I rarely read Bloomberg because I didn't like the man. It wasn't until early October when the other MSM outlets began to carry related stories.

The liquidity crisis in the markets was close to being solved and had hit the 1 trillion mark when Congress said enough. There was talk about mortgaging our children's and grandchildren's futures and a bill was passed by the House and Senate freezing the bailout at 1 trillion. There were enough votes, and then some, to override a Presidential veto. October 20, 2009 will forever be remembered as the second Black Tuesday. The DJIA fell the limit and trading was suspended. The same thing happened Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The market lost 2,700 points, give or take, in just 4 days.

We received a truck every day beginning Wednesday and still couldn't keep the shelves stocked. When the manager tried limiting; people would buy the limit, take it to their car and come back for more going through a different checkout lane. The computers weren't set up to prevent it from happening. A portion of the Saturday delivery was held back without explanation. There was to be an employee meeting after work on Saturday.

“Corporate says they can no longer supply this store and we will be shutting down for an unspecified period. *At ease.* We held back a portion of the latest shipment and I'm instructed to sell it to you at cost. *At ease.* In addition to your regular pay, you will receive two weeks' severance. The checks will be available Monday. *At ease.* That's it for now; see everyone Monday morning at 8am.” (I figured he must have seen the movie *Stalag 17* one too many times.)

My apartment was month to month and no notice was required to move out. I spent Sunday loading the Chevy with a plan in mind. Between my *kiss my butt* money and three paychecks, I hoped I could afford that well, Ozarks, here I come. The only thing I bought on Monday at Costco was Charmin, six bundles. I had the lights and gas turned off and left a mailing address in care of general delivery, Edgar Springs, Missouri not realizing that Edgar Springs didn't have a post office. It went to Licking.

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I listened to the radio on the way down I-44. Trading was suspended by 10:30 EDT. The London markets didn't open and the two Russian markets had closed halfway through

the trading day. The Tokyo Stock Exchange announced they wouldn't open the following day. My 6 acre parcel wasn't in the Mark Twain National Forest, but it was so close, it was the same as being in there. Let me remind you of my gold and silver saving program. It was suspended now but I had that to fall back on.

"Won't be more than 50' deep and I guarantee good water with a rate of flow of at least 15 gallons per minute. Gonna need a well pump and solar power to run it. I got the stuff and can let you have it cheap."

"How long?"

"Day, day and a half."

"How much?"

He gave me a figure that didn't include the pump and solar.

"How much for the pump and solar panel?"

The combined price was less than my severance pay so I told him to go ahead. I planned to run a water line to the cave and extend the septic line so I had water and sewer. Grid power wasn't available nor was phone, cable or internet. If I wanted TV, I'd need a dish and dish internet was also available for an unreasonable price. I didn't have a cell phone. Light was a different question and I needed a used refrigerator/freezer for my meat. The refrigerator cost \$100 and I could keep it cold running the Honda a few times per day. I bought a used recliner and a used twin bed with mattress. I also bought a card table and two used folding chairs. I could put my Coleman stove on the table to cook. A week later, my additions were done including installing a toilet on a platform and a solar heated shower. Good thing too because I was down to my last \$200 of cash.

I listened to my windup radio to get the news. I had gotten out of West St. Louis just in time. The market continued to fall the limit three days straight before they closed the NYSE, NASDAQ and the Pacific Exchange. The St. Peters store, where I worked, and the other 3 Costco stores in Missouri hadn't reopened. There had been no announcement about it but a reporter tried to get a story. He got a 'no comment'.

Although I wanted the simple life depending on lamps for light and an ice house to store my frozen goods, you can't have that when you start living in a cave in late October. I could shop garage sales and find oil lamps, buy new wicks and bottled kerosene, but the ice house would have to wait until it was cold enough. I could freeze ice in a rectangular pan and store it in an ice house insulated with sawdust that I got from cutting firewood but not until it was cold enough. If it got cold enough, that is.

I thought about building an ice house from logs and decided I didn't have the necessary skills. I decided to build it 4' wide by 8' foot long and 8' high using construction grade plywood and 2x4s. I'd put a sheet of plywood on for a roof and seal it with tarpaper and

tar. All of the material I needed easily fit in my Chevy. I gathered up the sawdust into a pile and covered it with plastic. Now I had to wait for cold weather. I had just started construction when deer season opened and I caught two hunters on my posted 6 acres. I was carrying my rifle slung and moved it to low ready.

“This land is posted. I’m going to ask you to leave real nice like.”

“We didn’t see any signs.”

“Where’s your white cane? You’d have to be blind not to see the signs. Move on fellas, no hunting here today.”

“We’ve been hunting this piece for years, nobody ever complained before.”

“I bought it a while back and I assure you it’s posted, that’s one of the first things I did.”

They had a quiet conversation between themselves.

“Ok, we’re leaving, but we’ll check out your claim that you own this place. What’s your name?”

“Henry ‘Hank’ Brown. The deed is recorded.”

They left and I went back to the ice house I was constructing. I realized that I hadn’t thought about insulation. Without some kind of insulation, the ice would melt as fast as I added it. I went back for another 8 sheets of plywood and rolls of R-19 insulation. The plan was to make the inside of the ice house 3’x7’ and cover the inside of the outer wall with the R-19. I had only a handsaw and a hammer for tools plus a box of hinges to build a door.

I assembled it in layers with the plywood running lengthwise rather than vertical. The size was chosen to limit the amount of sawing. It took 3 days and a badly bruised thumb to construct, before I had it done. I dug out about 4’ of dirt with my entrenching tool before I started and piled that out of the way until I finished. I’m sure glad I didn’t have to dig a fox hole with one back in the day. I wore gloves and still had a blister.

Might not have been the best idea I’d ever had, but it got it done, building a plywood door. I went to town and picked up several blocks of ice because I’d taken some time off and gotten a deer about 50 yards from my front door. The ice house chilled right down and I froze half of the cut up deer and jerked the other half seasoning it with pepper and salt.

While the meat was drying, I threw together a smoke house after yet another trip to the lumberyard. I was down to my last \$50 cash and the fuel in my tanks. I’d do this batch with hickory charcoal. I found a library and checked my favorite websites on the net. One had a post:

Thursday, March 13, 2009

LAST NIGHTS SESSION WAS ONLY THE FOURTH TIME IN 176 YEARS THAT CONGRESS CLOSED ITS DOORS TO THE PUBLIC

Word has begun leaking from last night's special, closed-door session of the United States House of Representatives.

Not only did members discuss new surveillance provisions as was the publicly stated reason for the closed door session, they also discussed:

- The imminent collapse of the US Economy that occurred on September 2008,
- The imminent collapse of US federal government finances by February 2009,
- The possibility of Civil War inside the USA as a result of the collapse,
- Advance round-ups of *insurgent US Citizens* likely to move against the government,
- The detention of those rounded-up at "REX 84" camps constructed throughout the USA,
- The possibility of retaliation against members of Congress for the collapses,
- The location of *safe facilities* for members of Congress and their families to reside during expected massive civil unrest
- The necessary and unavoidable merger of the United States with Canada (for its natural resources) and with Mexico (for its cheap labor pool),
- The issuance of a new currency - THE AMERO - for all three nations as the proposed solution to the coming economic Armageddon.
- Members of Congress were **forbidden** to reveal what was discussed. Several are so furious and concerned about the future of the country, they have begun leaking info anyway. More details coming later today and over the weekend. Spread the Word!!!

That explained a lot of what had happened in late 2008. However, it did not explain what was going on now. Perhaps by way of extension, it did. I hadn't heard anything about roundups or people being put in camps.

Surely that didn't include me. I done my time in the Corps and reserve and was as much of a patriot as the next Marine. I've always kept a low profile and shouldn't be on any database. I didn't even apply for unemployment, maybe I should. I thought that over and drove back to St. Peters where I filed the application. I indicated that I had no phone, just in case. The post office would forward my check to general delivery Licking, Missouri. That gave me 26 weeks of income and I'd fake looking for a job. They hadn't raised the benefit over the 2008 benefit; it was still \$320 per week. Times 26 weeks made me rich, \$8,320.

I waited the mandatory week and then two more for the first benefit check. It was 4 days in the forwarding process, but I had \$640 in my jeans. I would continue to get \$640 every other week until my benefits ran out. I checked on the local low temperatures and

would have to make all of my ice in December and January, presuming it got cold enough.

Since I'd need a lot of sawdust for the ice house, I felled a pair of dead standing trees and set about cutting them up for firewood. I didn't take me long to figure out I'd need a chainsaw, like it or not. I'd also need something more than 2 5-gallon gas cans to store gasoline. I could store the lube oil and chain oil in the cave. I also needed a more permanent solution to my electrical needs. I decided on 3 PV panels, a charge controller, inverter and one or two good batteries.

My purchases went in spurts; I'd fill the tanks and buy one thing every time the unemployment came in or save it until I had enough to buy one item. I had my CCW and mostly carried the PT1911 in a Bianchi Interceptor belt holster. My rifle and shotgun were behind the seat, cased and unloaded.

It didn't get cold enough to really make enough ice so I bought several more of the large blocks to keep the ball rolling. I did get the PV panels installed and concealed at the top of the bluff, running a heavy gauge wire to the charge controller. I bought a used 300-gallon farm tank and repainted it in a camouflage pattern and began adding 10-gallons every time I went to town. When I realized that I wouldn't have it filled before the unemployment ran out, I bought two more Blitz cans and added 20-gallons per trip. I also added a Coleman oven so I could bake bread. I had to laugh at myself; it was mostly an extended camping trip.

I got a library card in Licking and began to read for something to do. It must have been tough for old Abe to study by lamp light; it's awful trying to read. I checked and could use diesel fuel in the oil lamps, but I can't recommend it. So, I added a 2-gallon can of kerosene every check. Things went in fits and starts; I usually ended up getting something for my preps only when I demonstrated a need. That's how I got the advanced first aid kit, cutting firewood. I didn't cut myself but it was oh so close. Went to a local doc and complained about a fever and diarrhea and got a ten-day course of antibiotics. Also mentioned those bad headaches I got and got number 40 Tylenol #3.

I got everything needing done before the unemployment ran out and socked the remaining money away for a rainy day. Fuel wise, I had 13 2-gallon cans of kerosene, full and stabilized fuel tanks on the Chevy and 320 gallons of stabilized gas. I had 2 25-gallons bottles of propane for the Coleman stove. I planted a guerilla garden around the 6+ acres. Guerilla gardening isn't what it first seems to be, I looked it up at the library. Nevertheless, I followed the story examples of guerilla gardening and had all kinds of heirloom plants growing here and there. Sure was nice to have fresh vegetables and I'd probably have berries next year. The dwarf and semi-dwarf fruit and nut trees would probably take a few years before they produced.

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It's official; a Congress critter finally uttered that dreaded D word, Depression. I don't think he was talking about his mood. I spent a lot of time on the library computer that day, checking sources and websites. What it boiled down to was that everyone was blaming us for their problems, what's new? Nobody was threatening war except Iran, so that was nothing new. They announced that they'd succeeded in mating the nuclear weapons they weren't building to the Shahab-3 missiles they didn't have. Range: 1,300km. Gotta keep an eye on the Israelis now.

I was making the rounds gathering vegetables when Randy showed up.

"Hello the camp."

What camp? He must mean the ice house or the smoke house.

"I'm over here."

"My name is Randy Oats. Heard there was a hermit living on this small acreage. I thought you might need a hand."

"By definition, a hermit is a loner, where did you get that idea?"

"Look, I'm out of work and there aren't any jobs available."

"Apply for unemployment, I did."

"You're not from around here?"

"St. Peters, up by St. Louis, but I live here full time now."

"Awful small for a house."

"That's the ice house and the other is the smoke house. I'm camping out."

"I see."

"No I don't think you do."

"What, no hot blond babe in a cave?"

"No, no blond babe. What's that rifle you have?"

"German Karabiner 98K Mauser. Fires the 7.92x57mm IS cartridge. You don't have a rifle?"

"I have a rifle, but I'm not carrying it."

“What do you have?”

“Springfield Armory M1A.”

I didn't mention it was a Super Match; there was just something about this guy I didn't like. I had paid \$2,800 for the rifle, far less than the MSRP of \$3,400. I wasn't about to mention the cave. My sleeping bag was right behind the rock covering the cave's entrance as was my grate and cast iron frying pan and pot. I could take meat from the ice house for supper to preserve my secret.

“Where is your cave?”

“What cave?”

“Don't hermits live in caves?”

“This one doesn't. Anything else you want to know? If not, I need to get back to what I was doing.”

“What were you doing?”

“Gathering supper. I'm mostly a meat and vegetable kind of man.”

“I see you have enough for two, mind if I join you?”

I figured that if I fed him, he might leave so I took a chance.

“Venison jerky and vegetables. I'm going to make a stew.”

“Sounds good.”

“Is there somewhere I can drop you after supper?”

“Edgar Springs?”

“Fine.”

He kept rattling like a snake and I stayed tight lipped. He didn't appear to be getting the message. When supper was finished, I fired up the Chevy and dropped him off on the edge of Edgar Springs. When I got back, I rearranged things to support my camping assertion, just in case. Two weeks later he was back and still on foot.

“Did you apply for unemployment?”

“I didn't qualify because I haven't really worked steady. I was hoping you'd thought about my offer.”

“I have and I don’t need any help, thank you.”

“Are you going to gather vegetables?”

“Don’t have any ready, going to have to eat my last MRE Entrée.”

“Is that your M1A?”

“Yes, like it?”

“Nice rifle, wouldn’t mind having one myself.”

“I know what you mean; I scrimped and saved for 4 years to buy my weapons collection.”

“What else do you have besides the pistol and rifle?”

“A Mossberg 590A1 shotgun and a .22 rifle.”

“First class guns.”

“When your life depends on them, don’t go second class.”

“Is that a fighting knife or a bayonet?”

“Yes. Both. It’s the Marine Corps fighting knife bayonet for the M16 that works on the shotgun. I’ve had training on knife fighting.”

“You were a Marine?”

“I am a Marine. Once a Marine, always a Marine. But I’m out now.”

“I take it you’re a good shot?”

“It’s easy enough; I put a scope on the rifle.”

“I guess I’d better be going.”

“See you soon,” I said crossing my fingers.

I need a way to tell him he wasn’t welcome on my acreage but he always had the Mauser handy. During October, I had company again, the hunters I’d run off the previous year.

“We checked and you do own the property Mr. Henry Brown. We’ve hunted this place for over twenty years and we don’t intend to stop now.”

“Why risk it, the Mark Twain National Forest is less than a mile away.”

“We’ve talked it over with our lawyer and we can hunt here. Easements may be created in a number of ways. In most of the United States, using someone else's property, for example, for ingress and egress over a certain number of years, regularly and without the consent of the property owner, can give the user the right to continue using the property for the same purpose for as long as the user wishes. This method of acquiring an easement is called a *prescriptive easement* or *easement by prescription*.”

“So, what you’re saying is that if you trespass long enough, it’s no longer trespassing?”

“That’s what our lawyer said.”

“I’ll go find a lawyer today. Meanwhile get off my property.”

I found a lawyer who was willing to take my case. He got a temporary injunction blocking their access until a court hearing could be held. I checked at the library and they seemed to have a point, there was something called a prescriptive easement. They were served by a Deputy Sheriff and didn’t get to hunt my land this season.

STATE LAW ON HOSTILE CLAIMS MUST INTEND TO TAKE THE LAND Arkansas
Maine Michigan Missouri Montana Nevada South Carolina Texas Virginia Vermont Wy-
oming MUST BELIEVE LAND IS OWN Georgia Iowa Louisiana – Possession alone has
shown hostility in all other states. Note: These requirements are defined in court opin-
ions by judges. They can change overnight with a new court decision. If you are affect-
ed by an adverse possession situation, see a local lawyer to rely on the most recent
court cases.

My lawyer said they’d lose their easement and if they did, I was set. Otherwise, there was nothing I could do to stop them. They had advice of counsel, but hired another lawyer when I sued. The lawyer they hired was new and inexperienced and had gone to law school in Iowa. Iowa had a different law and was the only state in the nation with one like it. The hearing lasted one day and neither man claimed to own the land. The judge made the injunction permanent and I made two more enemies. He also awarded costs so they were stuck with the legal fees.

One of the two men came out to my place a few days later and was carrying. When he pointed the rifle at me, I shot him in self-defense. Randy was there and said, “You can’t do that!” So now you know the rest of the story. I left the body lay right where it was other than turning it back over and went for the Sheriff. The Deputy asked what happened and I told him, I’d only used deadly force because the man was going to shoot me. They seized my pistol, cuffed me and returned to the acreage. When they discovered his loaded rifle with the safety off and the Glock model 30 in his hand behind his

back, they took off the cuffs and we waited while an ambulance came out to pick up the body.

“We have your statement and will refer it and our reports to the County Attorney. It will be up to him whether we charge you or not.”

“What about my PT1911?”

“If you aren’t prosecuted, it will be returned.”

“How long before I know?”

“As long as it takes for the County Attorney to make a decision.”

“What do I do for a handgun in the meantime?”

“Buy another. So far, you haven’t been charged, let alone convicted. You can buy one but I’d suggest you don’t use your CCW until this is sorted out.”

I found a very used but serviceable .45ACP made in Argentina that I could afford and bought it to temporarily replace my PT1911 and as a backup once I got my PT1911 back. Then, I stopped by the attorney I’d used on the easement issue and filled him in. He said that he doubted they’d prosecute.

It was a very long 3 weeks until a Deputy returned my PT1911 and told me that no charges would be filed but that didn’t mean the family wouldn’t bring a wrongful death lawsuit. Relieved, I treated myself to another piece of survival equipment, 2 ham radios, an Icom IC-7000 mobile that I could use in the cave or in the pickup plus an Icom IC-9100H base station. I added an MFJ 1798 10-band vertical mounted on top of the bluff next to the 3 solar panels mounted on pipe mast. The MFJ equipment was about as cheap of an antenna and mast setup available and the Icom base station the top of the line.

While I’m not a Glock fan, I wouldn’t have mind having the Glock 30 or his Austrian STG58 Para rifle. I assumed he’d gotten the rifle from DSA and the Glocks are popular pistols. I got to thinking about Randy and the dilemma he posed since there were no signs of habitation on the acreage. I walked the land looking for pine trees I could fell and use to build a log cabin. I had some but not enough. There were more than enough in the National Forest, but would I dare?

The Other Shoe – Chapter 3

It was worth a trip to the library to find out. I looked up the forest and determined that it required a special use permit to harvest firewood. It referred me to the nearest Ranger station. Hat in hand, I went to the only station I knew of and inquired. Yes, it required a special use permit. Yes permits were still available. Harvesting was limited to marked trees. I was expected to clean up all debris from cutting down a tree. I persuaded the Ranger to show me what was available locally. A few of the trees were smaller trees that succumbed to disease and would be perfect. I applied for and was issued a special use, firewood permit.

The Lodge pole pine, which was mostly a west coast tree, had been planted in the 1930s to rebuild the pine forest that loggers had decimated. They were susceptible to some beetle and the dead trees had to be removed to make way for new plantings. The lodge pole pine would be perfect to build a log cabin and dead trees were dry trees, ready to use. Over the period of two months, I cut and hauled nearly enough whole logs to construct a small log cabin. I also hauled the debris, as required; because some of it could be used for firewood although pine wasn't my favorite.

The first few rows of logs were semi easy to get into place. Then, I built an A Frame to get the higher levels in place. I left open spaces for a fireplace, one window and a door. I could make the door. I gathered rock from the creek bottom that was round to build the fireplace. I worked from dawn to dusk and the cabin slowly began to take shape. I installed two layers of Lexan for a window and sawed logs in half for the door. I took some of my precious cash and bought a firebox and chimney pipe and began to lay rock around it to create a rustic looking fireplace.

I was getting into the spirit and built a bed using hemp rope as the foundation and constructed a table, crude cabinets and a counter with a sink. I put in a standard hot/cold water faucet but only hooked up the cold water side. Since I had septic, I got a toilet and built a small enclosure for a toilet, sink and shower. I took an idea from *Lights Out* and bought 2 drums which I painted flat black and plumbed in as my sole source of hot water for the cabin and connected the hot water side.

Finally, I stocked the cabin with a minimal amount of food including a partial can of coffee, and small amounts of the foods one would typically expect to find in a cabin. I checked the fireplace and it burnt a good fire and put off enough heat to keep the cabin toasty warm even on the coldest of days. Speaking of which, I finally got back to the library and checked the Farmer's Almanac. It forecast a very cold winter. I also checked the forums and the current news.

The troops and their equipment were all home from Iraq. A decision was pending on Afghanistan. The markets had leveled off in the \$8,000s. The price of oil was stable in the \$110-\$115 range because the US was developing offshore and North Slope resources. The TransCanada pipeline was over half completed. Gas and diesel prices had stabi-

lized in the \$3.00/\$3.50 range respectively. The Costco website showed a list of closed stores, including all four in Missouri.

Edgar Springs was a tiny town with a population of 200 or less. It had no claim to fame except that it was the mean center of US population in the 2000 census.

The library I refer to was the Licking Branch of the Texas County Library. The County seat, where the main library is, is the city of Houston with a population of about 2,000. The largest city in Texas County was Cabool, population 2,200. Texas County is just south of Phelps County where my acreage is. You wouldn't expect to find a library in a town as small as Edgar Springs.

Many people like to characterize the Great Depression by referring to the movie *The Grapes of Wrath*, based on a novel of the same name by John Steinbeck. However, the movie was more about the great dust bowl than the depression. I once knew a fella whose father worked in Chicago as an accountant during the Depression. He ate one meal a day, the Blue Plate Special, which cost 6 bits in those days. Everyone wasn't out of work, despite claims to the contrary. It peaked at 33% in 1933, but by 1937, it was only 14%. It briefly increased in 1938 to 19% but then a military buildup for WW II began. So far, most authorities were classifying our economic situation as a recession, not a depression.

Don't let them kid you; this was a Depression, not a Recession. My grandfather was a farmer during the Depression and they ate, but didn't get much money for their crops, forcing them to tread water for about 8-9 years. There weren't any jobs available in the local area, counting all the Counties surrounding Phelps County. Gold was way up and I suppose I could have cashed in an ounce or two, but then what? I only had so much and when that was gone I'd be up to my butt in alligators.

Then I realized I had the use permit to harvest firewood. A cord of firewood went for about \$150. I didn't have many expenses, \$50 a month would keep me in food and fuel. If I reached a saturation point and couldn't sell any more firewood, I could keep it and use it myself. Firewood down in this area was sold by word of mouth and they'd call and place an order. I guess I needed a cell phone after all. I also needed a gimmick, lots of people sold firewood. They delivered it by the pickup load which was more like $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cord, called it a cord and charged full cord prices.

My gimmick would be to give value for value, a full cord of firewood for the full cord price. Plus, I could cut the firewood to order, 12", 14" or 16" long pieces. It might mean a little extra work but I could save the saw dust for the ice house. I didn't want to advertise in the papers or yellow pages so I made up cards to post at super market bulletin boards.

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Stop and think about what I did. I started small scale preps before Y2K and perhaps in anticipation to that scare. Unlike a lot of other people who had money to plow into preps, I just continued what I was doing. When I had food covered and some water, I moved into arms and ammunition. Next I got only as big of a generator as I needed and because of a comment on Frugal's got the quietest one I could find. It was only later that I extended my preps to a higher level, food wise.

I found a small property with a cave in the Ozarks owned by a family who was desperate to sell it. Everything went fine until I had a dispute with a hunter who refused to believe the judge. If you don't like the verdict, you can appeal. It's inadvisable to take the law into your own hands, you may run into a Marine who remembers his training and has a hair trigger.

I wondered where the firewood idea came from for a while. Then, I remembered a story that TOM had written and posted on Frugal's, *A Family Alone*. Whether that was my inspiration or not, I was now in the firewood business, had a cell phone and hopefully would have customers. It wouldn't be pure profit because of the gas the chainsaw used. Other than that, I would be paid for my labor and it wouldn't be much.

It was three weeks before I got my first order and they wanted a cord of hardwood cut to 16". I dropped an old oak tree in the forest, cut it into barely manageable pieces and hauled the logs home. Then, I cut it down to 16" pieces, getting 6 pieces per 8' log. I had a terrible time splitting it and stacked as I went. When I had a pile 3 layers deep, 8' long and 4' high, I piled it in the back of the pickup and some in the trailer. The guy was shocked when I went to the trailer and began unloading more after emptying the Chevy.

"I only ordered a cord."

"I'm only delivering a cord; a full cord, not a pickup load which is about 80 cubic feet. A full cord is 4' deep by 4' high by 8' long."

"I'll be damned. Here you go \$150. Any chance I could get another load like that?"

"I'll have to split it, do you want it the same length?"

"Yes. I'll take all the dry oak like that you can provide up to 4 cords."

"Do you want me to deliver it one cord at a time or split all three cords and deliver them in one fell swoop?"

"I have enough to hold me, split it all first. Are you using a splitter?"

"I don't have one."

"For the price you're charging you should. Want to borrow mine? I used to pull permits and harvest my own, but stopped when I had the heart attack."

“How much rent are you going to charge?”

“As long as you’re delivering full cords, I’m money ahead. That’s more than enough rent.”

It was a large oak tree, very large, and I filled the order from that one tree with some left over. I delivered the firewood when it was cut and even stacked it being the guy had a bad heart.

“That wood you delivered is about 5 pickup loads. Five pickup loads at \$150 are \$750 dollars. I’ll make you a deal. You keep the splitter and the spare parts I have and we’ll call it even.”

“I’d like that, but this is my only source of income, I’m afraid I’ll have to pass.”

“I’ll let you keep the splitter and pay you \$150.”

“Word of mouth is the best advertising there is. If you tell your friends how well you were treated and that they get a full measure of firewood, you have a deal.”

The splitter was a Timberwolf model TW-6 with optional log lifter. It was their most powerful log splitter and featured a twin-cylinder 18 HP OHV Honda GX engine, electric or pull start, which easily powered the 22 GPM 2-stage pump. The TW-6 produced 28 tons of force and had an 8-second cycle time. It was too good of a deal to turn down. For all I knew the guy only paid \$400 for the splitter, but it would sure help my business. The thing was my permit only allowed me to gather firewood for personal use.

I went looking for another oak tree and decided I’d just split it at the 16” length which worked well for fireplaces. This wood would be split and stacked, ready for delivery when I hopefully got another order. The way I looked at it was that although some stoves could take 18” and 20” wood, it was a whole lot easier measuring a full cord if I cut it 16” long because a full cord was 3 face cords.

I cut down a second dead standing red oak and after that, a Shagbark Hickory. I wanted the hickory for my smoke house but would sell it off, a little at a time, for one heck of a lot more money. Typically, I got orders for 3-4 cords per month right up until winter set in. Then, my market dried up. I kept going and harvested 4 more red oaks before my permit expired. I had something to keep me busy, splitting and stacking the red oak firewood. White oak was the most expensive firewood because it had a higher BTU rating, but I couldn’t find any dead standing white oak.

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The small amount of money I’d earned with the firewood allowed me to fill in a few corners of my preps, refill my gasoline containers and buy another 500 rounds of Lawman

and Gold Dot. I'd been practicing with the PT1911 because I hadn't been that good of a shot, in the beginning. I'd gone through 500 rounds of the Lawman just getting to be a reasonable shot. The Lawman was practice ammo while the Gold Dot was pure-D defensive ammo.

Since the Hickory gave off the most heat per piece of firewood, I burned it in my cave, keeping it comfortable. I hadn't done a good job chinking the log cabin and until I could solve that problem I'd live in the cave. It was colder than normal this winter and I pulled the battery from the Chevy and stored it in the cave. I put a cover over the truck, just in case we got snow. I got out during deer hunting season and took a buck and a doe.

I butchered both and froze about half of the meat after cutting it up and wrapping in butcher paper. I sliced the rest thin like and made jerky out of it. What do people live in caves live on? In my case, it was mostly beans, rice and venison with coffee or tea to drink. I made sure to eat vegetables on a regular basis to get the vitamins they might contain. I like most vegetables, like corn, green beans, beets, and tomatoes.

My entertainment for the winter came from the Hallicrafters receiver. Some of what I heard was normal ham chatter one usually hears listening to the ham bands. On one channel I sometimes listened to, conspiracy theorists were having a heyday. They talked about the Kennedy assassination, Richard Nixon's resignation, Watergate, The Iran-Contra scandal and seemed to be worried that terrorists would attack the country again, any day. Needless to say, I didn't listen to that frequency often because they only changed subjects once in a while.

I also listened to the broadcasts that Steve Quayle made. I have some good news in that regard, he's still a crackpot. That said, I must say that had everyone listened to him, we might not be in the financial mess we're in. I connected my regular radio to the antenna to get the local news which also included a bit of state news and a small amount of national news.

The unemployment rate in Missouri was as high as the national rate, about 10%. The government bailout hadn't worked and the Chairman of the Federal Reserve freely admitted that we were in a Depression. He maintained, however, it wouldn't be as bad as the Great Depression because of the lessons we'd learned. Maybe someone had learned them, but it seemed to me that the Federal Reserve hadn't. Ben Bernanke agreed that the Fed had made the Great Depression worse, saying in a 2002 speech: "I would like to say to Milton [Friedman] and Anna [J. Schwartz]: Regarding the Great Depression. You're right, we did it. We're very sorry. But thanks to you, we won't do it again."

Want to bet? I'm giving odds. I'm a gambler; want to bet whether Randy was really out of here? I figure him for a mooch who is smart enough to leave before he totally wears out his welcome. I'd tested him and found him wanting when I said I was down to my last MRE Entrée. If he figured out that I had a two year plus supply of food, I half expected to be looking down the barrel of the K98. I also had the impression that if I of-

ferred him work cutting firewood, he'd either decline because of a *bad back* or agree only to let me do most of the work.

On the national level Russia had announced they intended to take back their port on the Black Sea, located in Sebastopol. I should point out that the Ukraine and that portion of Georgia not under the control of Russia were now members to NATO. Nah, Russia wouldn't dare. They were forced to withdraw their fleet from the Mediterranean. Russia dredged the port of Tartus and had built a dock in the Syrian port of Latakia. That money went down the drain and the Syrians were unhappy because they'd lose the rubles the crews spent. The Russians had taken long term leases on the port facilities, so Assad didn't really care.

Much as it had the last time, the US sank further into Depression, dragging most of the world with it. Although it happened slowly, over a period of time, the world returned to the modern equivalent of the 1930's economy. One example of the extent of the fall was the military programs. Most military building efforts are strung out over a multiyear period so we could pay for them. The feds no longer had the money and work was cut back on building the final F-22s, F-35s and the USS Gerald R. Ford. Other proposed purchases were put on hold. That move threatened to increase unemployment. It was a vicious, downward spiral.

I got an order for firewood mid-winter. The guy sounded desperate and wanted two cords. Full cords, he said, not those 80 cubic feet pickup loads. I got the address and told him it would take me a couple of days because I had to get the pickup running and load the wood. I shouldn't have worried about the pickup; the diesel was laced with PRID and anti-gel. The warm battery in the cave fired the pickup right up I let it idle for a while, while I loaded two cords of wood. Not wanting to waste fuel, I shut the Chevy down and continued to load the first cord. With that done, I returned to the cave and had supper, showered and crawled into bed. Man do I hate lukewarm showers.

I finished loading the trailer the following morning with split logs from the second cord pile and took off to deliver it. When I got there, I unloaded and he piled and stacked the firewood. He had one cord stacked and was well into the second cord when I called a halt.

"I'll go back for the rest of the second cord, but I could sure use the cash for the first."

"That was \$125 per, right?"

"It is \$150 per and you know it."

"Well, I helped stack it."

"You volunteered, I didn't ask for help. I'll take the \$125, but you'll have to pay me for both, right now."

I estimated that he got about 160-170ft³. I didn't load up the rest of the second cord and return. He called back.

"Where's the rest of my wood?"

"Where's the rest of my money? A man's word is his bond and you broke your word. The going price in the middle of winter for a pickup load of firewood is around \$125, get over it."

"All this over \$50?"

"I'll bring the remainder of the second cord. I won't unload it until I have my cash in hand."

"Oh, all right, bring it and I'll pay you up front."

The first time someone screws me, shame on them. The second time someone screws me, shame on me. I made sure my PT1911 was clearly visible in the holster on a belt over my coat. I kept the Mossberg close at hand. I climbed in the back of the pickup on top of the wood, thumb strap released on the holster and shotgun at low ready. He set down his shotgun and brought me my \$50. I hurriedly unloaded the rest of the second cord and beat feet to the acreage.

You owe me, when I got back; there stood Randy, shivering due to the cold. His Mauser was slung and he was dancing around trying to keep warm.

"I see you got a cabin in. Why's it padlocked?"

"To keep uninvited guests out."

"Can you unlock it, I'm freezing."

"It will be cold inside; I let the fire go out."

In fact, it was very cold, hovering around ambient temperature. I started a fire using hickory and it warmed up pretty good. However, due to my poor chinking job, the winds whistled through.

"Man you have a draft, how do you live here?"

"I just get by. I'll figure a better way to caulk the cabin next summer."

"There's nothing wrong with your chinking, the logs shrunk. Replace the mortar next year and you should be fine."

"You know about log cabins?"

“Worked on a few, that how I messed up my back.”

“Let me put on a pot of coffee and you can tell me more.”

“Got anything to eat?”

“Macaroni and cheese okay?”

“Yeah, but fix two boxes. No fresh vegetables I suppose?”

“I have some canned.”

I turned away and started the vegetables heating and boiling the macaroni and cheese. I opened a can of butter and made a quart of instant milk. I had bread, in the cave, but told him I'd run out and hadn't baked. Over dinner we talked about building log cabins and I learned there were several types of construction, some that didn't have gaps between the logs. Modern log cabins were as tightly sealed as any other modern construction.

“I'll give you a ride back to town.”

“I was hoping you'd let me stay.”

“Sorry, only one bed.”

“How did you ever come out on that shooting?”

“Self-defense.”

“You murdered that guy.”

“The County Attorney felt otherwise. Ready to go?”

“I'll get my coat. You're not very hospitable.”

“I like being alone Randy. For the first time since I've known you, you finally paid for a meal with the knowledge you shared. Call it even and please don't come back, I don't welcome the company.”

I do seem to have a flare for creating enemies, don't I? Nobody in the tiny community of Edgar Springs seemed to know Randy or anything about him. I wondered where he slept in a town so small it had few hiding places. It wasn't my problem and I'd officially put him on notice that he wasn't welcome. I locked the cabin back up after taking the butter and milk to the cave.

With two of my cords of wood gone, I harvested one more tree despite the fact that my permit was expired. There were several people in the forest harvesting and I was but one of many. I hauled 8' logs back to the acreage and cut them down to 16" pieces and then split them. The A frame was getting quite a workout. Well, how else would you load a log 24" thick and 8' long? The weight put the box of the Chevy right down on the frame. The splitter worked both horizontally and vertically, so I didn't have to lift the cut pieces up. The tree I cut down was one of the marked trees because it was already dry. The volume of the main log was about 100ft³ and there was another trunk section plus plenty of large branches. I guess this red oak tree went 3 cords plus some kindling.

My property was nearly square, like I mentioned before. It ran about 515' on a side and was listed as 6.089 acres on the County records. I had 5' of property on top of the bluff and the cave opened on my property and extended under the land of whoever my neighbor was. It was 100% dry except for condensation of moisture from my breath and cooking. I went to Licking and bought a 5-gallon can of that white sealer paint they use to seal basement walls and a 6" brush. I got the front section of the cave painted and about half of the second before I ran out of paint. I went back to Licking for another 5-gallon pail and went to the library to check on the state of the state, the nation and the world.

In one word, it was worse. Check that, that's an understatement. Unemployment was at 15%. The government had resorted to buying up and distributing beans and rice. They were soup lines in every major city ala the Great Depression. Apparently nobody had jumped off skyscrapers, if that's any consolation. The finger pointing going on was all pointed to the US. We'd stopped importing oil except from the North Sea, leaving the Middle East scrambling to find other buyers. There was only one, China. This resulted in an oil glut and falling prices; China was paying for the oil with US dollars and only offering \$60 per barrel.

The benchmark for oil prices is Brent light sweet crude. West Texas Intermediate trades for about \$1 more per barrel and OPEC trades for about \$1 less per barrel. Currently, Brent was priced at \$72 a barrel, meaning OPEC would have to discount the oil by \$1 per barrel. They declined to go that low. They would go \$71.50, but that was the limit. China was planning on sending delegates to OPEC. Some pundits suggested that they would give the Arabs an ultimatum.

I checked my funds and ordered the package plus a CD V-717 from Radmeters4U. I needed to sell more firewood and rebuild my cash reserves because there was no way I was going to touch my gold and silver. You knew about that, right?

In 1928, the US Treasury decided to reduce the size of its currency in order to speed up transactions, and also to cut costs. By this time, the Federal Reserve had taken over much of the currency market, and the prices of gold and silver had risen greatly. For Series 1928, only \$1 Silver Certificates were produced. Fives and tens of this time were mainly Federal Reserve Notes, which were backed by and redeemable in gold. All this would change, however, with the beginning of the Great Depression in October 1929.

The United States was plunged into an economic disaster of profound proportions. Many citizens blamed the fluctuating price of gold, which directly affected the US dollar because it was pegged to the value of gold.

President-elect Franklin Roosevelt felt the same way. He persuaded Congress to recall all gold coins, gold bullion, and gold certificates, which circulated alongside Silver Certificates. This prompted Congress to quietly place the US on the silver standard. On May 12, 1933, the Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed, which included a clause allowing for the pumping of silver into the market to replace the gold. A new Series 1933 \$10 Silver Certificate was printed and released, but not many were released into circulation.

In 1934, a law was passed in Congress that changed the obligation on Silver Certificates so as to denote the current location of the silver. This law also allowed the government to exchange silver bullion for the certificates, not just silver dollars. The 1933, along with its sister, the 1933A, \$10 silvers, as well as the 1928 \$1 silvers were phased out and replaced with certificates of Series 1934. The small-size \$5 Silver Certificate was introduced with this series, as well.

The rise in demand for gold for conversion payments that followed the similar European resurrections from 1925 to 1928 meant a further rise in demand for gold relative to goods and therefore the need for a lower price of goods because of the fixed rate of conversion from money to goods. Because of these price declines and predictable depressionary effects, the British government finally abandoned the standard September 20, 1931. Sweden abandoned the gold standard in October 1931; and other European nations soon followed. Even the US government, which possessed most of the world's gold, moved to cushion the effects of the Great Depression by raising the official price of gold (from about \$20 to \$35 per ounce) and thereby substantially raising the equilibrium price level in 1933-4. However, under the fiscal strain of the Vietnam War, President Richard Nixon eliminated the fixed gold price in 1971, causing the system to break down.

However, Congress was now mandating a recall of all gold and silver in public hands. They would pay \$200 per ounce for the gold and \$4 an ounce for the silver. The recall included numismatic coins. There was a hue and cry raised and on the ham bands people were talking about a Second Revolutionary War. However, the gold recall had one shortcoming; people who paid cash for their gold and silver were all named *Cash*. He died, didn't he? Seems like it was back in 2003.

Only people foolish enough to use their credit cards to buy gold and silver left traces. The seller dutifully recorded name, address and other information the credit card company required. Plus Congress saw fit to include legislation that allowed Treasury employees to access credit card records. The new BATFEPM (PM for precious metals), had the authority to round up the gold and silver. This was getting interesting and after I finished painting the cave, I went back to Licking and logged on. After a few BATFEPM agents had been killed, Congress went one step further, ordering the seizure of all firearms.

The Other Shoe – Chapter 4

I immediately bought an IWB holster for the PT1911 and turned in my CCW to the local Sheriff. I carried two spare clips in my left hand rear pocket and my wallet in my right hand rear pocket. I had purchased the guns when I lived in St. Peters and now lived in a cabin on 6 acres near Edgar Springs, they'd never find me.

"You're Henry Brown?"

"I am. There must be a lot of people named Henry Brown."

"Quite a few actually. However, you lived in St. Peters, right?"

"You've got me there. I used to for a fact."

"And, when you lived there you purchased 3 firearms, a Springfield Armory M1A rifle, a Mossberg 590A1 shotgun and a PT1911 pistol."

"You've got good records."

"Please bring us those firearms. There's a new law..."

"I would if I could."

"I suppose you had all three in a boat on a lake and your boat overturned."

"No, the other one, I sold them to get money to live on. Between the price of fuel and food, it was selling them or starving to death."

"Did you sell them to one person or several?"

"Several, and no I didn't get names because they never offered. You can't imagine how hard it is to sell a \$3,400 rifle that's been upgraded with a good scope."

"How much did you get for it?"

"\$3,000, I was desperate."

"The shotgun and pistol?"

"Same story. Had to sell them at a big discount. I have bills of sales though. Can't really make out the signatures and I used cash as a name."

I'm right handed. I filled out the bills of sale right handed. I signed them left handed. First time in my life I ever tried writing left handed and the signatures were illegible. They searched the cabin, the ice house and the smoke house. They ran metal detectors

over a portion of the acreage; anywhere where the ground appeared to be disturbed. They never found the cave because I had added a bit of camouflage. Not much just a little; all done with Randy in mind.

Speaking of him again, I haven't seen him since I fed him the macaroni and cheese and told him he wasn't welcome. He had good ideas though and I used a sand and cement mortar mix to seal the gaps in the logs. It appears that I'll be able to live in the cabin from now on. I checked with the Forest Service about a permit for next year.

They told me I was too early; they hadn't finished marking trees so they didn't know how many permits they would issue. They put me on a waiting list.

My favorite patriot fiction writer is Jerry D Young and Tired Old Man is a close second. Between the two of them, they've covered just about every survival scenario one could think of. They wrote a lot about GTW (Global Thermonuclear War) and TOM had his Rule of Threes. He claimed that bad things happened in threes. So, here I sat, waiting for the other shoe to drop. TOM also developed a spreadsheet that allows you to calculate your shelter stay time after the peak radiation level. I wrote him and he sent one. Simple reply with spreadsheet attached, probably got a lot of requests. It was posted on the net. I think that Frugal should have posted it too; I know TOM would have granted permission, were it required. The upside was he probably got a lot of Squirrels email addresses. Jerry must have been a local boy, he sure knows a lot about Missouri.

The BATFEPM? They looked until they were blue in the face and never came up with a single firearm, not even when they patted me down. Oh, I didn't always carry when I was at home on the acreage. I know, I know, bad plan. Worked out well in this case, maybe I just got lucky. They also looked for gold and silver while they were at it although I denied owning any.

"If I had gold and silver, would I've have been foolish enough to sell off my firearms?"

They looked for a while longer, no doubt expecting to find the 933 ounce gold ingot from the *Central America* in one of my cabinets. They did find a bunch of scrap metal outside, but it isn't enough to sell. Meanwhile, the NRA found some sucker to appeal his guns being seized. It went to Federal District Court, held for the plaintiff, *res judicata*. The US appealed to the 9th Circuit. District Court upheld, *res judicata*. The 9th Circuit upheld? Be still my heart. SCOTUS denied cert., same reason. It seemed that Heller meant something after all. *Res Judicata* is the doctrine that says, *the thing (res) had already been decided (judicata)*.

Then, the plaintiff had to sue again to get his firearms returned. It was more like DC than anyone imagined. In a snit over being overturned, Congress tried to re-implement the Assault Weapons Ban a second time and couldn't pull it off; they were one vote short in the Senate and 10 votes short in the House. They didn't know it at the time, but that failure kept Red Dawn from becoming anything more than a Patrick Swayze movie. I said we hadn't had WW III, yet, and the calderas were peaceful.

I started taking firewood orders for delivery in the fall. It wasn't something I intended to make my life's vocation. I was already a skilled fork lift operator. I also got requests for pickup loads of Hickory. They didn't bat an eye when I said \$125. I checked with the Forest Service and they issued my special use permit, reminding me that the wood was for personal use. That was my intent but personal use can include anything including harvesting it for a friend. The wood was free, I charged for my labor. As soon as I could, I located and cut three Hickory trees and 3 red oaks. My customers from the previous year all wanted firewood. I told them that due to inflation, my price was \$175 for a full cord. When the guy who tried to rip me off called, I told him I'd changed occupations. He pressed, I relented for \$175 per full cord paid up front and not stacked. He said he wanted Hickory. I said, fine, \$200 for a full cord unloaded but not stacked, same terms, cash up front.

In no time at all, I had sold all of the prior year's firewood and what I harvested this year. I needed a Hickory so I'd have firewood for myself. I cut two more and 3 more red oaks. I found that I could squeeze two face cords (~85ft³) in the pickup if I was careful stacking it and by charging \$125 for a pickup load, I made a bit extra. The orders began to peter out, probably because someone had taken my signs off the bulletin boards. I made new ones reflecting the higher prices. I also got back to the library for the first time in a while and got caught up on what the MSM was saying. If they were right, I needed more ammo.

I had just reread *Keys to the Kingdom* wherein the best advice had been, *Beef, Beans, Bullets, Bullion, Bunker. Not necessarily in that order.* No way could I buy bullion but beans and now bullets were legal and available although expensive. I could buy beef roasts and ground beef at the market plus I had a nicely furnished shelter (bunker). I'd sold 16 cords at \$175 per including a few of the double face cords and took in a shade over \$2,800. Plus I heard around that someone in Licking wanted a fork lift operator. I got the job based on my previous experience. It seemed that good things came to those with patience. Fortunately, it was only a 15 mile compute, one way, about 1 gallon of diesel.

On my new job, I worked from 8am to 4:30pm with a half hour for lunch. I held onto the firewood money in case something I really needed became available. By the way, after the mortar set, the cabin no longer leaked air and I moved in the cabin, permanently. I did my clothes at a Laundromat, got a shave and a haircut. Boy, did that barber earn his money. At \$15 it had been a bargain. When the paychecks started coming, I started keeping the Chevy topped off and buying a few things at the market, I was getting awfully tired of venison.

I also bought sliced bread and bologna for lunchmeat sandwiches. Over one weekend, I did an inventory of my preparations and ordered more from Emergency Essentials. I preferred Walton Feed, but they're slow and the freight is excessive. For the moment, there didn't seem to be waiting lines for LTS foods. My first purchase was the one year supply of grains and legumes in super pails and I added one super pail of white sugar.

I bought hot cocoa mix from the grocery store, I prefer Hersey's. The grocer said Hersey's stopped making it. To improve my social life, I made sure to buy Oscar Mayer bologna. Or, is that their hot dogs?

Since my special use permit hadn't expired, I continued to harvest logs on weekends. I usually started Friday night after work and dropped the tree. I trimmed the branches and cut the logs on Saturday and hauled the big logs home. I'd return on Sunday and clean up the trash and haul it back to the acreage. Then, every night after work, I split and stacked firewood until the sun gave out. I hadn't been in such good shape since boot camp. When my special use permit expired, I had several cords of wood stacked, for my own use and just in case.

I heard around that the guy who sold firearms locally was mad as a wet hen. It seems that some customer ordered a full 500-round case of Black Hills 165gr BTSP and refused to take it when he learned the price. I bought it and got a small discount in the process. Up to this point in time, I'd only fired 3-4 rounds of the hunting ammo. It was that big of a bargain, \$400 plus tax out the door. But hey, when you're busting your butt cutting firewood, \$50 seems like a lot of money.

I made it to work every day come hell or high water. I quickly learned the features of the Hyster forklift and was moved to a different position using a larger lift, which included a nominal pay raise. I didn't get a big head, I thought I had it made at Costco until they closed their doors.

Remember what I told you about China and the Arabs? I was doing my level best to stay current with the news. Neither China nor the Arabs would budge and they were \$10 a barrel apart on the price of oil. Back in the good old US of A, we had wells coming in on the North Slope and off the East Coast. California had balked at oil production off their coast and had been sued over the issue. The environmental lobby flatly stated that they could keep the issue tied up in the courts for years. They were wrong.

The US Attorney sued California in Federal District Court. The Court held for the feds. California appealed and the 9th Circuit upheld the lower Court. Cert. denied. *Captain, there be oil in our future*. A new refinery began construction near the coast, not far from Santa Barbara. The environmentalists sued. Same outcome, the refinery was nowhere near where anyone lived, the oil coming to the refinery in a pipeline. They also tried to block construction of the pipeline. No soap. The TransCanada pipeline was complete and pumping, lowering prices.

By this time, the US imports of foreign crude had dropped somewhere between 5% and 10%. US oilfields that had been capped because they weren't economical to operate reopened and most of the oil was West Texas Intermediate (WTI). Our sole source of imported crude continued to be from the North Sea, a primary provider before things went to hell. Why do they call it Brent crude? Shell names their oilfields after birds and the North Sea fields were named after the Brent Goose; one more useless fact.

I was making a good wage, a bit more than Costco paid, and saving nearly every penny. The EE order cost around \$750 delivered but, it was a year supply of grains and legumes. Since it included a pail of popcorn, I even had something to eat as a treat. Cast iron is good cookware, but it's not really the best for popping corn so I bought a small set of pots and pans for the cabin and some of those blue granite cups, saucers and plates. I already had a service of 4 in flatware in the cave but added a second for the cabin. My reasoning was, *what if Randy shows up again?*

I hunted deer but failed to get one so I bought a half of a beef, some boneless pork loins, bacon, half a dozen hams and one small Butterball turkey. I added a used refrigerator to the cabin and installed another PV setup to power the refrigerator and a few 12v lights. I rebuilt the sun heated water setup and finally got enough hot water to really enjoy my showers. I thought I got a real deal on the refrigerator. I asked if it ran and the guy plugged it in and the compressor ran just fine. I didn't wait to see if it actually got colder. It had a pinhole leak in a Freon line or whatever they use these days. It was still cheaper than a new one, if I didn't count my time.

It was cold enough to freeze large blocks of ice and I refilled the ice house. I'm beginning to believe Al Gore got it all wrong, but hey, he invented the internet. The internet and the World Wide Web isn't the same thing. A fella named Licklider and his associates at MIT invented the internet. A fellow named Sir Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web while working for CERN in Geneva, Switzerland. Al Gore's claim: *And the funding for Mosaic itself came from the High-Performance Computing and Communications Initiative, a federal research and development program I helped pass into law while I was a Senator.* Apparently no one else voted for or against the bill. Another thing; if he makes his house any greener they'll have to open a separate power plant for him.

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There was a story about George W. Bush. He was seen getting on a plane headed to Asunción, Paraguay. Didn't he buy some land down there?

Buenos Aires, Oct 13 (Prensa Latina) An Argentine official regarded the intention of the George W. Bush family to settle on the Acuífero Guaraní (Paraguay) as surprising, besides being a bad signal for the governments of the region.

Luis D Elia, undersecretary for the Social Habitat in the Argentine Federal Planning Ministry, issued a memo partially reproduced by digital INFOBAE.com, in which he spoke of the purchase by Bush of a 98,842-acre farm in northern Paraguay, between Brazil and Bolivia.

The news circulated Thursday in non-official sources in Asunción, Paraguay. D Elia considered this Bush step counterproductive for the regional power expressed by Presidents Nestor Kirchner, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Evo Morales, Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro.

He said that "it is a bad signal that the Bush family is doing business with natural resources linked to the future of Mercosur."

The official pointed out that this situation could cause a hypothetical conflict of all the armies in the region, and called attention to the Bush family habit of associating business and politics.

The ranch apparently sits over a gas field and a huge amount of water. However, it can't be all bad if he's going up against Castro and Chavez. Does he still get Secret Service protection down in Paraguay? Simple question, right?

In 1965, Congress authorized the Secret Service (Public Law 89-186) to protect a former president and his or her spouse during their lifetime, unless they decline protection. In 1997, Congress enacted legislation that limits Secret Service protection for former presidents to ten years after leaving office. Under this new law, individuals who were in office before January 1, 1997 will continue to receive Secret Service protection for their lifetime. Individuals entering office after that time will receive protection for ten years after leaving office. Therefore, former President Bill Clinton will be the last president to receive lifetime protection, and President George W. Bush will be the first to receive protection for only ten years.

The only way for Dubya to get lifetime protection was to move in with his Dad and hope his Dad or Mom outlived him. Why Paraguay? Smaller target, perhaps? Out of the range of Russian and Chinese missiles? He'd left one heck of a mess when he'd left office, but when did that mess really begin? I don't have a clue, I was just curious.

Unemployment slid another 0.6 points to 15.6% this past month. Home heating oil rose 6¢ a gallon, on average while gasoline and diesel both rose slightly, under 10¢ a gallon. Prices were expected to fall when the new refineries came on line. I stored the super pails in the cave and pulled out a canister of popcorn along with a can of Crisco. I specifically told them when they cut up the meat to cut the roasts to regular thickness and then cut them in half. They forgot or something and I had to get a hacksaw to cut them down before they thawed. They did the same thing with the round steaks, but I used a cleaver on them.

I checked my guerilla garden and it looked good to go so I didn't bother planting anything else. Working fulltime, I didn't really have time to do any canning but I got prepared, just in case; I bought an All American canner, two cases of lids, 6 cases of quarts and 12 cases of pints. They had various pickle mixes and other things available by the case so I loaded up. Since I had strawberry and blackberries, I got some pectin and 4 cases of jelly jars. I found a good recipe online and copied it. I learned that the difference between strawberry jam and blackberry jam was the lemon that went into strawberry jam. I didn't take very long to prepare jams, either. I used a camping toaster because of my electrical situation, but had always liked toast with jam or jelly. I put up all I'd need for the immediate future.

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Although my wages were higher than they were in St. Peters, I was actually making less money in terms of purchasing power. The property taxes were very low on the acreage even after I built the cabin. That made the difference and my frugal ways didn't hurt. Every chance I had to lay in more super pails or store bought food, I did. I noticed that the weather was changing, the amount of ice in the arctic was increasing and it was getting colder, even here in southern Missouri. I was forced to add more PV panels and install a tank heater in the Chevy lest the engine not start. More PV panels meant more batteries and a larger inverter. Fortunately my charge controller was large enough.

While I'm not what one might call a social animal, it's pretty hard not to interact with people you work with. I couldn't do much of that when I was on the forklift. Lunchtime was a different matter altogether. It was mostly run of the mill questions like do you live near Licking; no, I have a small acreage near Edgar Springs. Good hunting up there; didn't even see a deer this past season. Married; managed to stay single, I'm a bit of a loner. Big house; home built log cabin; no kidding. Wood stove, the whole 9 yards; I'm off grid and use solar panels for what little electricity I need. No TV, just radio. Chit chat, getting to know one another, the usual I suppose.

There was one fella who didn't say much, Harry. He had the look of someone who knew the score, probably another prepper. Of course that's not something you just bring up, especially if anyone else is around.

"Don't suppose you use any of the forums, do you?"

"Might"

"I'm on Frugal's, Mad Dog 2525."

"Sheephound 007."

"I think I may have seen some of your posts. Don't post much do you? Sort of like me, I'm mostly a lurker."

"Mostly read the fiction and check out Homesteading and Self Sufficiency, Homestead Food Production, Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, General Patriot Discussion and Firearms."

"That's about what I review, Harry. My problem is that I don't have internet and have to use the Library computer here in Licking."

"Been at this a while?"

“My last regular job was in St. Peters before I moved down here. I was a forklift operator/stock clerk for Costco.”

“Get started when you worked there?”

“I did; it was before that Y2K thing. I started off double and triple buying. I also started putting up money for an armory and the usual LTS food and various supplies. Did what I could and eventually decided to look for a bug out place. Got the 6 acres next to the National Forest, reasonable price, had septic but no well.”

“What do you think of this Government seizure of precious metals and guns?”

“To quote Thomas Jefferson, *I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against any form of tyranny over the minds and lives of men. To preserve our independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must take our choice between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude. If we run into such debts, we must be taxed in our meat and drink, in our necessities and in our comforts, in our labors and in our amusements. If we can prevent the government from wasting the labor of the people under the pretense of caring for them, they [the people] will be happy.* That pretty much covers the economy and Congress apparently can't understand what the SCOTUS decided in Heller.”

“Can you believe that crap? Man it's worse than Nazi Germany when Hitler took power.”

“I've been blessed with a visit by the BATFEPM.”

“How'd you make out, if you don't mind me asking?”

“Don't have any firearms. I was able to produce bills of sale for all those I purchased on 4473s.”

“They buy that?”

“Not at first.”

“Mind if I ask what you had before you sold them?”

“A Super Match, a 590A1 and a PT1911.”

“Good stuff; it's a shame you had to sell them.”

“Based on that visit, I learned that the most common explanation people use is that their boat overturned.”

“But how did you get Bills of Sale?”

“Hypothetically? A person could fill out a Bill of Sale to somebody named *Cash*, list the serial number, etc. and sign it left handed. Or if he or she were married, have the spouse sign it as purchaser.”

“What brand of ammo would a guy shoot in a Super Match?”

“Match grade. I preferred Black Hills and had both the match hollow point and the soft point boat tail.”

“Gold Dot for the PT1911?”

“That and Lawman for practice. A good assortment for the shotgun including Remington 8-pellet reduced recoil 00 and Brenneke slugs, full power.”

“I favored HydraShok when I had firearms.”

“Sell them?”

“I must have if they didn’t fall into the lake or get stolen.”

“Probably wouldn’t buy the stolen excuse without a police report.”

“Good point. Have somewhere secure in case of fallout?”

“I didn’t have the money to build a shelter.”

“Check around, there are lots of caves.”

“I might just do that, thanks Harry.”

A person has to hold their cards close to their vest and even if the guy you’re talking to is of a like mind, it may not pay to show your hole card, right away. A good rule of thumb is that anything you’re not willing to reveal about yourself shouldn’t be asked of the other guy. Another good rule of thumb is to avoid lying. Like the shelter question. The answer was correct, as far as it went. I’d found the cave when I found the property. Maybe Harry would like to go deer hunting next fall.

If you’d followed the financial meltdown, one thing you heard was that history was repeating itself and we were essentially entering the Second Great Depression. *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.* It was a lesson that I’m sure wasn’t lost on anybody. Which brings us to the point of what it took to end the Great Depression; that, in and of itself, is depressing. It took WW II, not FDR. His greatest claim to fame other than serving 3 plus terms was converting us to socialism. Most of us have become so accustomed to the idea of Social Security we depend on it. Unfortunately, they give away more than they take in. Plus what they take in is loaned to the government mostly through bond purchases. Robbing Peter to pay Paul, perhaps?

Where do I stand politically? If you have to ask... you wouldn't understand the answer. Backing Ron Paul is about like backing Ralph Nader (the guy who hates cars) or Lyndon Larouche (a one time member of SDS). Paul has many good ideas, but he can't get elected as President. Better to vote for the Republican or Democrat so you have a real say in the election. Me? I'm a Jeffersonian. Mostly.

Jeffersonians, so named after Thomas Jefferson, support a federal government with greatly constrained powers, and are strong advocates and followers of a strict interpretation of the US Constitution. Jefferson himself followed and exhibited these principles. Jeffersonian philosophy also called for state and local governments to safeguard the rights and property of citizens. Jeffersonians recognized both private and common property. During his early public career, Jefferson hoped that each State and County would be smaller examples of the national American Republic. He believed that republican governments established and governing at these levels would best keep the federal government in check.

The Jeffersonian philosophy held that all men had the right to be informed, and thus, to have a say in the government. The protection and expansion of human liberty was one of the chief goals of the Jeffersonians. They also reformed their respective state systems of education. They believed that their citizens had the right and should be educated no matter their circumstance or status in life.

Internationally, Thomas Jefferson and the Jeffersonians believed that America was *the world's best hope*. They believed that the United States would be an example to the rest of the world in establishing their own sovereign constitutional republics. When the French Revolution broke out, American supporters and allies of France had hopes that the monarchy would fall and the people would form a government of themselves. Domestically, original Jeffersonian thought also had agrarian elements, and believed that the farmer should be the backbone of any nation, supplying it with a strong work ethic and virtue.

I also believe that things are going to get much worse before they get better. It may take a worldwide disaster or even a war before we all get our act together. Many people can't accept the idea that the Cold War never ended, it just changed character. And now, with Russia awash in oil and gas money they're doing their level best to make up for lost time. Worse, they're getting there. Project 955, the new Borei class submarine, is equipped with the new Bulava (SS-NX-30) SLBM derivative of the Topol-M (SS-27) ICBM. They had commissioned 3 subs so far with 3 more under construction and a total of 8 planned. Each submarine could carry 16 missiles.

The Other Shoe – Chapter 5

We needed Winston Churchill; instead, we got Neville Chamberlain. The SS-NX-30 is a derivative of the SS-27, except for a slight decrease in range due to conversion of the design for submarine launch. The SS-27 has is 21.9 meters long, far too large to fit in a typical submarine. The largest previously deployed Russian SLBM was the R-39 / SS-N-20 STURGEON, which was 16 meters long. Russian sources report that the Bulava SS-N-30 ballistic missile can carry ten warheads to a range of 8,000km. Other sources suggest that the Bulava might have a range of 10,000 km, and is reportedly features a 550kT yield nuclear warhead. Apparently up to six MIRVs can be placed at the cost of offloading warhead shielding and decoys.

Is it 6 or is it 10? Three subs, each carrying 16 missiles with 10 warheads per missile are 480 warheads. When the other three subs are commissioned it will jump to 1,080 and when the final two are commissioned, it will jump to 1,480. Some of their test launches succeeded and some failed. Should one assume that if a war breaks out they launch them all? If they all fail, no big deal; but if most succeed, it would be a very big deal. Whereas, using the lower number of 6 warheads, yields 888 when all 8 subs are in commission. And, what's this about increasing the number of missiles to 20?

The largest oil exporter to us from the Middle East had been the Saudis. Saudi Arabia had the highest OPEC export quota, the highest production capacity and exported more oil than any other OPEC member. They attended the OPEC meetings, agreed with everything discussed and then did what they wanted to do, regardless of OPEC. If I understand what I read, the problem OPEC had was valuing their oil in dollars. When the dollar was sound, that was great, but, then came the Euro. They had all since changed to the Euro.

Frankly, I don't like the way things have been going; the economy in the toilet, unemployment at the highest levels since the Great Depression and Russia using their oil and gas money to rebuild their military. You'd better keep an eye on the window and watch for Cuban parachutes.

I had groomed some vines to act as camouflage for the cave, but I guess I mentioned that. The camouflage, I mean, not what I used. They hung from the top of the limestone bluff, I planted fake thorny blackberry plants at the base and while the thorns were sharp, the leaves were plastic. You'd need a magnifying glass to tell, though. The branches were real and about 12' tall, reaching the vines. The blackberry tends to be red during its unripe ("green") phase, leading to an old expression that "blackberries are red when they're green".

I caught that gal who works in the office, Lynn, giving me the twice over the other day. So, when she wasn't looking, I gave her the twice over. Pretty face, nice bod but nothing special other than she seems fit and trim. I asked around and learned she was 29 and single. Some of the guys called her the *Ice Queen*. Near as I could figure, some of them

asked her for a date and the look she gave them in response would freeze water in hell. They said her reply was gracious, *No thank you, but thanks for asking.*

I also learned that she lived in Licking. For someone who none of them had dated, they had a virtual catalog of information about the lady. She liked outdoors activities including hunting and fishing. She rode horses and had her own. She had an AA degree and was working on her BA attending night school. One guy said he'd seen her riding one day and she had a lever action rifle in a scabbard and a revolver on her hip.

I hadn't set a horse in years and didn't have one. Neither did I have cowboy guns. Not that I wouldn't mind having some, but only if I could buy them reasonably. Maybe with things up in the air with Congress and SCOTUS fighting over the 2nd Amendment, someone would get nervous and unload their guns.

"Excuse me, may I ask you a question?"

"It's Hank, right?"

"Yes, Lynn, Hank Brown. I heard that you have a lever action rifle in the scabbard of the horse you ride and a revolver strapped on your waist. What I wanted to ask was whether the rifle was a Winchester or a Marlin and what caliber."

"I don't want to broadcast the answer, I'm due for a break, want to get a cup of coffee?"

"Sure."

We went into the employee coffee lounge and each got a cup of coffee, one of the few benefits the company provided.

"Okay. The rifle is a Marlin 1895 cowboy in .45-70 and my revolver was from my grandfather. It's a 1993 Ruger Vaquero in .45 Colt. I wear what some people call a John Wayne rig, separate cartridge belt with an open holster. Do you have firearms?"

"No cowboy guns, but I have a M1A Super Match, a Mossberg 590A1, a PT1911 and a Winchester model 62A pump rifle. That's unofficial; officially, I never owned the model 62 and sold off the other three."

"BATFEPM?"

"They visited my cabin, yes."

By this time we were speaking in hushed tones, almost whispering. She asked a couple of questions about my background, marital status and if it were true that I was a hermit who lived in a cabin in the woods. I admitted that I lived in a home-built cabin in the woods, pointed out that I'd never been married and that I'd been a forklift operator for

Costco before they shut down their operation in St. Peters. Our break time ended all too soon and we both had to get back to work. I vowed to get a Marlin and a SAA knockoff.

Sometimes we'd be on break at the same times and she always said hello and smiled. On one or two more occasions, we visited for a few minutes about this and that, usually some story on the news. As much as I would have liked to ask her out to dinner, I never did. One time I mentioned that I was thinking of inviting Harry out to hunt deer. She got a gleam in her eye and asked if the hunting party could handle one more. I said that I thought it could and would ask Harry if he minded a 3 member hunting party.

When I brought it up with Harry, he said he was already committed to go with another group and would have to pass. He mentioned that he'd heard from someone that Lynn was a dead shot with a rifle. The next time I saw her, I told her that it wouldn't be a problem because Harry had a prior commitment. I inquired what she'd be using to hunt with and she told me she'd use her Marlin.

We got busy for a while and I had to forego my breaks to get the work finished. It wasn't just me; nearly everyone gave up their breaks for a while. The rumor mill said that the company was *experiencing difficulties*. With everyone working a few extra minutes each day, it added up and the company got past the bad spot. With the company over the hump, vacations would be approved for the deer and turkey hunting seasons.

"What are you going to use?"

"My M1A with a 5-round magazine loaded with BTSP."

"Did you get both deer and turkey permits?"

"Sure did."

"Good, I did too. I'd suggest you take that pistol you have just in case we run into any feral hogs. The booklet says to shoot them on sight."

The hunting seasons were divided up into sections including archery and firearm and the firearm season further divided into various sub sections like youth, black powder, and antlerless. Season opened on a Saturday and by Sunday evening we'd both taken a 4 point buck. Lynn hauled hers to town to get it butchered while I took Monday off to butcher my deer. Later, we went turkey hunting and both got two turkeys and one hog.

"Nice cabin, you say you built it?"

"Yes, I harvested the Lodge pole pines and put it together. The logs shrank a little and I ended up re-chinking."

"You have everything, a bathroom, a kitchen, a living area and a bedroom. You even have hot water."

“Only enough for a quick shower or two.”

“I suppose I’d better be going. See you at work Monday?”

“Sure. Say, would you like to go out to eat some evening?”

“Are you asking for a date?”

“Yes I am.”

“And that’s despite knowing my reputation?”

“That *Ice Queen* thing? I’d never forgive myself if I didn’t ask; you’re one heck of a lady.”

“Why thank you kind sir. Most of the guys who asked me out were married. There were some singles too, but I didn’t find them to have qualities I admire in a man. Sure, I’ll go out with you, just pick a date and time.”

“Would the Willow Tree be okay with you?”

“The Willow Tree? Sure, that will be fine.”

“Next Saturday, say around 5pm.”

“Let me write down my address and directions.”

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I took the hog and it to the butcher to get it cut, processed and wrapped. Although I intended to butcher my deer myself, I decided to treat myself and have him cut and wrap it too. He had a good meat case and I bought several slabs of bacon, taking the one full slab he had on hand and going back later for the slabs he had to order. He was cutting up chickens the day I picked up the ordered bacon and I bought 12 to add to the ice house.

That Saturday night, we had a nice quiet dinner, both selecting steak, and visited at length about our backgrounds, the state of the state, nation and the world. I learned she had two horses, not one, a stallion and a mare, both 6-year-olds. She only had 2 more courses to finish and she’d have her BA. Her auburn hair fairly gleamed in the soft lighting of the restaurant. She wore little makeup, a dab of lipstick, perhaps some powder and nothing on her eyes. I learned that she’d lost her father as a teen when he’d simply taken off. Two years previously, her mother had died of cancer, although she wasn’t specific of what type of cancer. Her mother and she had lived in her grandparent’s home and it had been willed to her mother and then her.

With the home came all of the contents including her grandfather's revolver and her father's Marlin. She said that there were other firearms and none of them were on the books. Her grandfather had a M1911A1, a Garand rifle and an M-1 carbine. Her father had a Ruger Standard pistol. She had a large garden and spent several evenings and weekends canning. Her days were very full with her various activities and going to school and she rarely dated. In fact, her previous date had been to celebrate her 21st birthday. She and her date had gone out for drinks and the date ended abruptly when he tried to take liberties.

"Do you think I'm pretty?"

"No, you're not. You're more like drop dead gorgeous. You have a charming personality, work very hard and you didn't find it necessary to paint your face like a brazen hussy."

"Thank you. Could we have an Irish coffee instead of dessert?"

"That would be nice; I haven't had a drink in quite some time."

"You have a problem with alcohol?"

"Only with the price. I was unemployed for quite a while before I got this job."

"How did you make ends meet?"

"I harvested firewood. It wasn't a lot of money but my needs were few."

"So, you're fairly self-sufficient?"

"Actually, I'm very self-sufficient. I probably shouldn't say anything, but do you know what a prepper is?"

"Is it a survivalist who doesn't plan on overthrowing the government?"

"That's as good of a definition as any, I suppose. You can put me in that category."

The waitress brought our drinks and we continued the discussion about prepping over two drinks. I implied, but never said, I was well prepped for most eventualities.

"Do you have a ventilation system for your cave?"

"What cave?"

"The one you hid behind the blackberries and vines."

"Hmm, the camouflage wasn't good enough?"

“For most people probably, but I was looking for it and knew what I was doing. Now, answer my question, do you have an air filtration system for your cave?”

“No and I don’t have a blast door either. It’s fairly nice; it was dry so I used basement paint and sealed the walls. It’s well stocked with food and the antennas for the communications equipment are at the top of the bluff.”

“I saw them. They’re well hidden.”

“Apparently they’re not hidden well enough.”

“That slab of rock should block most of the radiation, were there to be radiation, but you really should look into installing a ventilation system and some kind of door to seal the cave off. How is the cave equipped?”

“There’s running water from the well and it’s connected to the septic, so there is a bathroom of sorts, with solar heated shower. I don’t have much of a kitchen, just a Coleman stove on the card table. There is one twin bed.”

“Is there room for a larger bed?”

“Yes, but being alone, I only needed a single.”

“Do you plan to be alone forever?”

“Well, I suppose if the right woman came along, I’d have to buy a bigger bed, ventilation system and a blast door.”

“Start saving.”

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I had been saving, ever since I took this job. As I told her, my needs were few. I had most of the money set aside to buy the 50psi blast door (\$3,295) and the air filtration system (\$3,600) from American Safe Rooms. I had no idea how much it would cost to ship the things from Oregon. I called them up and got a complete price. I had more than enough to get them and asked for the information I needed to wire them the money. They indicated that they could deliver within a week, via motor freight.

Two weeks later, the equipment had arrived and I’d managed to install it. I put the ventilation system in the cave before I mounted the door. Mounting the door proved to be one of the hardest things I’d done in my life, it was heavy and awkward. Once I had the project done, I asked Lynn for a second date and told her I wanted to show her my *home improvements*. She said sure with a twinkle in her eye.

“Oh my, a blast door.”

“Be careful when you open it, it only clears the slab by about 2 inches.”

“Is that the air duct?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Still using the Coleman stove and only have a single bed?”

“I’m working on it. Give me a chance, would you?”

“I have a spare queen sized bed if you want it.”

“That would be easier than buying a new one, are you sure?”

“I’m sure. You have those 25-gallon propane bottles, why didn’t you get a propane stove?”

“At the time, I didn’t have the money and the Coleman stove met my needs. Still does.”

“I bake a mean loaf of bread in a regular oven.”

“Would you like to go out to eat tonight?”

“Let’s do pizza. Then we can go back to my place and watch TV.”

We got the medium deluxe pizza and a small pitcher of Budweiser. When we finished I followed her back to her place. Lynn turned on the TV and handed me the remote. She left to go make a pot of coffee. I started surfing the channels, looking for a news channel. I found MSNBC, CNN and Fox. I left it on Fox until she came back. As far as I was concerned both MSNBC and CNN were so biased, it gave me a bellyache to watch them. I discovered they hadn’t changed in the years since I’d last watched TV.

“We don’t need any bad news tonight to ruin the evening, give me the remote and we’ll pick a movie.”

Strangely, we ended up watching *Red Dawn* on AMC; the 1984 original, not the 2010 remake. It was a real shame about Patrick Swayze wasn’t it? The two forms of cancers that were evading a cure were brain cancer and pancreatic cancer. The surgical procedure for pancreatic cancer was called the Whipple Procedure and they removed your pancreas, a foot of intestine, part of your stomach and crossed their fingers while they gave you further treatment. Finally, they buried you.

“Why don’t you come back tomorrow after church and pick up the bed?”

“I’m not much of one to go to church, Lynn, but I could be here at 1pm.”

“I don’t go every Sunday either, how about we make it earlier? I’ll fix Sunday dinner so you’ll know I really can cook.”

“You don’t have to go out of you way on my account.”

“It’s nothing special, just a venison roast, potatoes, onions and carrots. Come on, give me a chance, you obviously paid attention when I gave you suggestions about fixing up the cave.”

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I arrived around 10am and she had the roast cooking on the stove. She’d apparently washed the bed linen and boxed it up. Before we loaded the box springs and mattress, she led me to the basement.

“This was the old propane stove we used before we bought the one we use now. As far as I know, it works perfectly. You’d need to clean it up, but that would give you a stove for the cave. You might be able to get Red Top Gas to put in a 1,100 gallon tank with a wet leg so you can refill the bottles. How many do you have?”

“Four. I never had a situation where 100-gallons of propane weren’t enough.”

“What do you think?”

“I guess I can fit it in. Gonna be a struggle to get into the cave. We’ll have a better stove in the cave than I have in my cabin.”

“We’ll?”

“Well, yes, do you have somewhere else to shelter if the need arose?”

“I was teasing, Hank. If I had been serious, I sure wouldn’t offer you a bed and a propane stove.”

“So, you’re saying that you like me?”

“What’s not to like? You seem like a decent, hardworking man who was taught courtesy and you haven’t made a single pass. Although I’ll admit, if you had made a pass last night after we got back from pizza, I may have taken you up on it.”

Lynn then proceeded to plant a light kiss on my lips. I kissed her back. We disengaged and got back to loading the stove into the Chevy followed by the box springs and mattress. The box of linens went in the front seat of the pickup. Over dinner, she asked if I needed any help getting the stove and bed into the cave. I told her it might make it easi-

er, but she wasn't obligated. I had an old appliance cart that would get the stove right up to the blast door, but getting through the door might be a struggle.

After dinner we washed up the dishes and she followed me back to the acreage. We moved the bed first because it had been loaded last and was the easier task to complete. The stove was simply an awful experience but we got it in and leveled. I'd need a flex line and some pipe to run to the tank. We didn't bother making up the bed since we could do it if we ever needed to use the shelter. I called Red Top Gas and inquired about a tank. He told me that they normally only put in a 550 for residential, but seeing as he didn't have one at the moment and I lived a ways out, they'd install a 1,100. He wanted to know when I could be there to show them where to set it.

"How about I just stake it out for you? I want it back near the bluff. Would an initial purchase of 300 gallons be enough until I can get more cash put together?"

"Yeah, but we'd expect you to fill it before winter."

"No problem. What's propane running?"

"Three bucks, but it will probably go up."

"Okay, I'll get more later."

"Don't wait long, it's getting hard to get and I'm on allocation."

I had coffee with Lynn on Tuesday and told her what the propane dealer had said. She said she'd top off her home tank and asked if I had enough money to fill my tank.

"I need 700-gallons to do that and it's three bucks a gallon. I can put my whole paycheck in it, but that will take a while."

"I should pay for some of it since I'm going to have a place in the shelter. I can pay for another 250 gallons."

"Can you afford to do that?"

"I wouldn't offer if it were a problem."

"I'll have to think about it Lynn, what would people say if they knew?"

"They already know you're my beau. I don't care what they say. They should learn to mind their own business."

"Am I?"

"Are you what?"

“Am I your beau?”

“You would be my fiancé if you just ask.”

“Are you serious? If you are, will you marry me?”

“I’ll call my minister and see how fast he can arrange it. Is a small wedding okay?”

“How small?”

“Just whatever witnesses we need.”

“We can go after a license tomorrow.”

It was relatively simple, fill out the application, pay them \$50 cash and wait 3 days to get married. Since we needed a witness to get the license, I talked Harry into being my best man. The license was good for 30 days and if Lynn’s minister wouldn’t do it, we’d find a judge. Lynn got one of her co-workers as her Matron of Honor and we were married Saturday morning.

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She suggested that I move into the house and that we keep the acreage as our bug-out location. I agreed with the suggestion and we went out to the cabin to get my clothes, CD V-717, CD V-742s, the charger and my firearms. With our combined income, we quickly had the tank for the cave filled and I plumbed it in with a gas pipe and flexible hoses on each end. Then, I got a call from a guy looking for firewood.

“I’m sort out of the business; I will sell you what I have cut.”

“I need four cords of the red oak, same as the other years.”

“How about I talk it over with my wife and get back to you?”

“You’re married now?”

“Just. We’re on our honeymoon. I’ll have to see how much I have cut and stacked.”

“How is the splitter working out?”

“Just fine. Oh, you’re the guy who paid for 5 pickup loads by giving me the splitter?”

“That’s me.”

“I see to it that you get your firewood.”

The Other Shoe – Chapter 6

When I checked, I had 4 cords of red oak and two of Hickory. I called him back and set up an appointment to deliver the wood. Lynn pitched in and we pocketed \$700. I suggested that it might be a good idea to cut more Hickory and if she agreed, I'd pull the permit. Anything to help out she said. If we ended up at the acreage for any reason we should have more firewood. The money bought .45-70 and .45 Colt ammo. Yes, I'd found a used Marlin 1895 Cowboy and an original model Vaquero with a 7½" barrel. Private sale.

She continued to board her two horses and we talked about building a suitable shelter for the horses, chickens and rabbits. I intended to follow the rabbit, worm bed, fish tank method outlined in numerous stories. Once summer came we spent every weekend completing those tasks except that we didn't buy rabbits, fish, chickens or worms. We did lay in hay and grain for the horses, and chicken feed, just in case.

I realized what a hurried up affair our marriage had been and we hadn't been intimate so we didn't have a problem in that regard. I asked her how it happened so fast. Her reply was that from the time she'd laid eyes on me, she'd been on a mission. We started to attend her church regularly. Once we had our firewood supply rebuilt, we went hunting and got 2 turkeys each. We hadn't applied in time to get deer licenses. Lynn tried to avoid cable news while I was glued to Fox channel a few hours every night. Little by little the world situation was taking a nose dive, financially and in other ways.

If I thought my life had changed after I lost my job at Costco and moved to the Edgar Springs area, it was nothing compared to the recent change. My first discovery came on our wedding night when I learned Lynn had been saving herself. After that, every day brought another discovery and they were good or better than good. With our combined incomes and careful planning, we were able to do so much more than I'd ever thought possible.

We revamped the cabin, replacing my homemade bed with another queen sized bed and bought a good used 240v, 100 amp diesel generator. We found and installed a 10,000-gallon diesel tank made of fiberglass and started to fill it with 100% biodiesel, purchased from a local man who pressed his soybeans and converted the oil. He fed the soybean meal to his livestock. He was charging about half the going price for diesel to members of his church and was a member of the same church as Lynn.

Attending those church services left me with a good feeling after church and it wasn't long before I was baptized and joined. I didn't know whether I'd been baptized as a child or not and a second couldn't hurt. I made untold new friends and began to move away from my reclusive ways. Careful about how we approached the subject, we began discreet inquiries into who might be a prepper and who wasn't. The one person we knew to be a prepper was Harry, from work. Lynn and I invited Harry and his wife Sally (I don't know when they met) out to the acreage to check out our preps. I learned that Harry fa-

vored the Austrian STG-58, the Remington 11-87 shotgun and the PT1911. Sally had an AR15 and a Browning Hi-Power but no shotgun.

Their tour started with the cabin and he pointed out it would get cramped when we had a family. I asked if my assumption that the children would sleep in the loft was faulty. He said not as long as we took steps to prevent them from falling out of the loft. I showed him the recent improvements, the used Koehler generator, our PV system and solar water heater. We moved to the slab concealing the cave and went into the cave. I could hear him sucking breath; he hadn't expected what he was seeing.

"You didn't just find this cave, did you?"

"Actually, my criteria for a piece of property were that it had to have a cave that was habitable. When I first moved here I lived in the cave. The cabin came later."

"Did you have water and septic?"

"The previous owner died before the well was installed; however, the septic was in place."

"Where are the antennas for your radios?"

"They're at the top of the bluff."

"Nice pile of firewood next to the house. Did you get that from the National Forest?"

"I've been pulling special use permits from the Forest Service for quite some time. When things got really tough, I sold some of it to keep afloat."

"Nice wood splitter, buy that?"

"In a way. My first customer used to harvest his own wood but he bartered it with me in exchange for several cords of wood."

"From what I see of your setup, you should be good regardless what happens."

"That's the general idea. Let me say that if nothing happens, that will be fine with us."

"TOM says bad things happen in 3s. If he's right, we have a ways to go."

"Who is this TOM? I've read his stories and always wondered if he was a half as well prepared as his stories imply."

"All I know is that he's close to 70 and has lived in Palmdale, California about 30 years. I think he has the firearms he talks about in his stories because he's described some problems he has had with them."

“Such as?”

“He has so little strength in his hands, he has trouble loading his pistol magazines and racking the slides on his pistols. He included the serial number of his Nazi .32 in one story so I believe he has it. He writes so longingly about the Barrett rifle, I just had to buy one.”

“You have a Barrett?”

“Sure do, M82A1M, the civilian equivalent to the M107. Shame I had to sell all of my guns,” he said nodding towards Sally.

“Nice gun, but they’re \$4 plus a shot to shoot.”

“I have some surplus, some of the Barrett M-33 and some of the Mk 211 MP.”

“How did you get that, it’s illegal?”

“Found a Sergeant in the Missouri National Guard who was down on his luck. Gave him \$250 a can and bought 4 cans over a period of months.”

“What did you have for a scope?”

“That BORS with a Leopold Mark IV 8.5-25x50mm ER/T M1.”

“You’re talking some real money with that setup.”

“About seventeen grand including the ammo I got from the Guardsman. Sally works and we saved for about five years to buy it. Anyway, nice setup.”

“Your rifle or my cave?”

“Yep, both.”

“Care for some coffee? We can go to the cabin and brew a pot.”

“Sally prefers tea.”

“I have about 4 different flavors of Bigelow, I’m sure we have something she’ll like.”

We visited for most of the rest of the morning. And then, Harry thanked us for the coffee and tea and said they had to go.

“It’s nice to know we’re not the only crackpots planning the overthrow of the government,” Lynn laughed. “I’m 30 and if we’re going to have kids, we better get started.”

“Sure, why not, practice makes perfect.” We slid the bolt on the cabin door and practiced most of the afternoon. Two weeks later, Lynn announced she was late.

Harry came to me and asked about the possibility of Sally and he sheltering in our cave if worse came to worst. I told him I’d talk to Lynn about it, but it was reasonably possible. Lynn agreed and for the two weekends that followed, we moved their supplies to the second room in the cave. I gave him a duplicate key to the padlock on the blast door and suggested he carry a pair of bolt cutters in case he lost the key.

The world economic crisis took another bump later in the year, perhaps reflecting the recession of ‘37. For some countries it was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Neighboring countries were invaded to secure additional food supplies. The UN condemned the attacks, but it was much like the 2008 invasion of Georgia by the Russians, the UN was ignored. Tired of supporting a powerless and thereby useless organization, the President gave the UN 6 months to have all of its staff and delegates off US soil. He also withheld our dues, effectively withdrawing from the UN. Moreover, he began to limit our participation in NATO due to the cost.

We held our breath as the world moved closer to some kind of confrontation. I felt it wouldn’t come until the Russians commissioned the 4th and 5th Borei class submarines. That could be a while in the future; the commissioning wasn’t scheduled until 2015. Russia’s track record in such matters suggested that it would more likely be in 2020. Little did anyone know that they had secretly commissioned numbers 4-6 and were working on the last two at a record pace. Starting with number 4, each sub carried 20 missiles.

We also didn’t know that they’d managed to actually MIRV 10 150kT warheads per missile, although that was within the specs for the Bulava missiles. About the only military program we had going was of the Arleigh Burke class destroyers and performing life extensions on the F-15s and F-16s. The F-15 was expensive, \$48 million for the originals and \$60 million for the Strike Eagles. Its replacement, the F-22, ran around \$400 million per copy but was worth the extra money, if we’d have had it to spend.

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It was the longest nine months of my life. Lynn had twins, a boy and a girl. We named him Charles (Chuck), after my father, and her Cynthia (Cindy) after Lynn’s mother. Lynn’s mother had been a twin although her twin sister died at birth. Lynn explained that twins seemed to skip a generation. I asked if she’d have more twins and she said it didn’t seem likely.

The company wasn’t able to give us pay raises due to the economy; we were thankful just to have jobs. Sally had lost her job and agreed to babysit the twins at our house for just a little extra money. She was drawing unemployment and we paid her cash, strictly under the table. The Missouri unemployment pool was running short on money and the

feds were forced to step in and provide additional funding. Doing it this way avoided all of the employment taxes and reportable income for Sally. Everyone was struggling just to put food on the table and fuel in their tanks. Harry would come over with Sally and the three of us carpoled to work.

“We’re going to have a war.”

“With who?”

“Best guess, Russia and China.”

“I sure hope not Harry, that’s a war that everyone would lose.”

“Too true, but it’s going to happen. We bought another 4 year supply of food from Walton Feed and I have it to bring out to the cave.”

“I suppose we should buy some things too, our supplies weren’t geared around having children.”

“Better plan on buying that locally. You can add regular food for when they get beyond the baby food stage.”

“Thanks Harry, I’ll discuss it with Lynn.”

“Sure, I’ll make up a list Hank, but it won’t be much, we can use the baby food mill to make baby foods. People were having babies long before Gerber came along (1937).”

“Do we have a baby food mill?”

“We have three.”

“I didn’t know.”

“I’m pregnant again. There were two heartbeats.”

“Twins?”

“No one baby with two hearts. Of course it’s twins silly. You really took that *be fruitful and multiply* to heart.”

“There’s no history of twins in my family.”

“I’d like you to do something for me.”

“What do you need?”

“Four rifles and pistols; something to put up for the kids when they grow up in case they’re not available.”

“Which rifle and which pistol?”

“Mini-14s or Mini-30s for rifles. I’m not sure about pistols, you be the judge.”

I bought four of Rugers new tactical Mini-14s and half a truckload (just kidding) of .223 ammo. They were difficult to come by because of the BATFEPM. Most of the weapons sales these days were accomplished without the 4473s. Only LEOs and military could have weapons according to the BATFEPM who was ignoring the SCOTUS. Uncertain about a pistol, I had a word with Harry. He had several recommendations and I ended up with the 9mm Browning’s. (Total – \$9,000 excluding ammo.)

Holsters came from a surplus company in Maine. I added pistol belts and magazine pouches. There were 7 magazines for each pistol that I got from Impact Guns. I bought the 5.56 from Ammoman. The strange thing about the law was that it outlawed guns but not ammo.

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“India nuked Pakistan.”

“Say what? When did that happen and why?”

“About 3 hours ago and it was over the Kashmir. Pakistan retaliated with everything they had. Israel went on high alert, so this could be the beginning.”

“Man, I hope not. Lynn is 6 months along and if there is a war, we could end up delivering the babies in the cave.”

“Babies?”

“She’s expecting twins again.”

“If it were me, I’d make sure I had all of the fuel tanks topped off, just in case.”

“I’ll call and have that done immediately. I’ll have to order #2 diesel to top off the diesel tank, my supplier doesn’t have any biodiesel at the moment.”

“What did you do on baby food?”

“I just received another 4 year supply from Walton Feed and we have a baby food mill. I got extra non-fat milk and instant buttermilk powder.”

“If it were me, I’d keep my NOAA radio running and use an earplug. We might not get much warning.”

“Do you have one?”

“Yes, but not with me.”

“Lynn has one, too, so I pass the suggestion to her and the warning.”

The EAS announcement came roughly six hours later. Lynn rushed to me and we told Harry. We piled in the pickup and headed home. Harry and Sally left to pick up a few things and said they’d be right behind us. We emptied the refrigerator and freezer compartment into a large Igloo cooler, gathered our bug out suitcases and the kids diapers, both clean and dirty. We took off traveling as fast as was safe. Harry and Sally showed up within 5 minutes of our arrival.

The diesel generator had been wired in to provide power to both the cabin and the cave. When we did that, it allowed us to get a laundry washer/dryer stackable for the cave. We also had added an electric hot water heater providing a good supply of hot water (40 gallons) for washing and laundry. The original system was available as a backup. Everything had at least one, if not two, backup systems and we were in good shape in terms of redundancy.

When the NOAA radio announced an Air Defense Emergency, we closed and locked the blast door and powered up the ventilation system. Lynn put on a pot of coffee while we waited for TEOCAWKI. Sally boiled water for a cup of Earl Grey. The CD V-717 along with a recent acquisition, the AMP 200, a very high range radiation meter, were ready to be connected, all antennas grounded and sensitive electronics placed in our faraday cabinet, save for a single NOAA radio.

Every state has some targets. Missouri had Kansas City, St. Louis and Whiteman AFB at the minimum. We were west of St. Louis and SSE of Kansas City. I’d say we were probably more like SE of Whiteman, if not ESE. Whiteman was about 120 miles, line of sight on a heading of 308° from Edgar Springs I later learned. The NOAA radio screeched and went dead. That could have been a warhead or a HEMP attack; I doubted we would ever know for sure. Whatever it was, it wasn’t close because the ground didn’t shake. With a GTW a certainty as opposed to speculation, we sat around the card table discussing our options.

“There are a couple of thousand people in Licking, I rather we avoid the place,” Harry said.

“Do you know of any other preppers in Licking?”

“Just the two of you.”

“I don’t know of any others either Harry. Our cabin is awfully small and we probably don’t have room for Sally and you in there once we get out of the cave.”

“I have a travel trailer I can pull out. It’s a 40’ fifth wheel that can be lived in year round. It’s the maximum allowable size, 400ft² and has multiple pullouts. It’s probably larger than your cabin.”

The cabin may look small, but it is 20’x30’ or 600ft².”

“It’s about the same size as the trailer with the pullouts extended.”

“And, don’t forget, we have a large loft.”

“You’re going to need it with four kids.”

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“Sally, do you know anything about birthing babies?”

“I never had any kids, so I just know the basics.”

“I watched the doctor deliver the twins, but that’s about all I know.”

“Hopefully we’ll be out of here by then.”

“I sure hope so.”

We would later learn that the strikes came in waves. Russia started with its SSBNs and then moved to launching its ICBMs. Russia didn’t limit its attacks to the US; they also attacked France, England, Canada and China. China attacked Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Russia. Israel attacked all of its enemies, taking out Iran with their Jericho III missiles before Iran could launch against them. Israel proved to be the only country in the Middle East that succeeded in repelling any and all attacks.

“How long would it take to get the fifth wheel?”

“Not much over a half hour, why?”

“Let’s get it now so it’s still available when this is over. We won’t get any radiation from Whiteman for several hours. We can worry about hooking it up to our water and septic later.”

“Sally, we’re going. We’ll be back in 45 minutes to one hour.”

“Do you have to?”

“I’d sure hate to lose the fifth wheel to some scavenger.”

“Be careful,” Lynn urged.

I didn’t realize that Harry’s pickup had the hitch in back or that he had a non-electronic diesel engine. He was a prepper and like most preppers, he had planned well ahead, anticipating EMP. I don’t know why he didn’t just hook up to the trailer when he came here in the first place. It turned out that once we returned, I had to get a log chain and add the pulling power of the Chevy to his pickup to get it near the cabin due to the slope of the property, near the road.

“I didn’t believe I could get the trailer over the grade. Otherwise, I’d have brought it in the beginning and saved the trip back to town.”

“That’s all right; we made it in less than an hour. We shouldn’t get any radiation for quite some time yet. I need to check my weather instrument to find out the wind speed and we can estimate how long it will be.”

The wind speed was around 12mph and gusting to 20mph. At 20mph, the remaining time would be 5 hours and at 12mph, the remaining time was 9 hours. We’d have to stay up late to get the peak radiation level and the one hour confirmation. I had a copy of TOM’s spreadsheet and it would give us a really good idea of when it was safe to leave.

TOM made a point to say that you shouldn’t leave your shelter until the level was below 104mR and in most of his stories suggested it was far better to wait until the level was below 50mR, if you could. Jerry made a point in his stories that when people did leave, it should be the older people who could cope with the risk of cancer better than younger people. The US government’s limit for radiological workers was 5mR per year and the US Army required MOPP level 4 around 25mR, give or take 5mR.

Between the blast door and the ventilation system, the slab of rock in front of the door and the amount of limestone overhead, I figured our protection factor was about 1 million. Unlike the PAW fiction stories, I didn’t have an airlock, just the single blast door. If there was radiation out there when we opened the door, we’d probably get a little inside. That was simple; don’t open the door until we were ready to leave. Little did that solution account for Sally’s claustrophobia. She didn’t have a problem when the door was open, but when it was closed and she knew she couldn’t leave, it started to eat on her. Maybe that’s why TOM suggested keeping some Xanax in your shelter.

The needle on the CD V-717 lifted off the peg about 7½ hours later, the wind was blowing harder than we thought. It continued to rise for several hours and began to level off. Finally the level started to fall and I was anxious to see where it would be in another hour. But, it began to slip up again, maybe that second wave of attacks we learned about later? It continued to climb until it reached 620R/hr per the AMP 200. According to the spreadsheet, we’d reach 100mR around 1,626 hours (68 days) and 50mR around

2,916 hours (121 days); a long time for someone with claustrophobia. Lynn and I weren't without resources.

Unfortunately we didn't have Xanax or Valium. We did have a substitute, Benadryl, an antihistamine that was the main ingredient in the majority of the OTC sleeping medications. Benadryl was cheap, about \$7 per 100 50mg capsules and we had several bottles. We decided to wait and see because it made no sense to start the Benadryl only to run out of it. There was a time when Benadryl was prescription only but that ended sometime in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. It was, at best, an adaptation, like TOM mentioned in stories referring to Clint Eastwood in *Heartbreak Ridge*. We had one course of treatment of Cipro, our only antibiotic.

We had enough food and water to stay in the cave for about 3-4 years. We might run out of diesel fuel but there was the PV backup that had been one of the original power sources. The Honda generator didn't have enough available gasoline for more than a few weeks, using it sparingly. Thank God it had peaked at 620R/hr and not 3,000R/hr. The latter would have kept us holed up for 15 months. As it was, 4 months would be pushing it. Since Sally and Harry were in their 50s and had no children, I'd have to ask Harry if letting Sally out for a short time after 68 days created any risks, besides cancer.

One thing was certain, one or more of us would get to play doctor since Lynn only had 3 months to go. I had several medical documents on my laptop, Virtual Naval Hospital, No Doctor, Hospital Corpsman Manual, Ranger Medic Handbook, Special Forces Medical Handbook, Survival Medicine, Wound Closure Manual and the US Coast Guard Medical Manual. The most comprehensive was the Virtual Naval Hospital manual because it covered every procedure a doctor might face at some time in his career. Since our military was integrated and sailors had dependents, no doubt it covered delivering babies.

On the other hand if we could get Sally to concentrate on learning how to deliver babies, that might get her mind off the closed in feeling that she was developing. I realized that the paint I had applied went a long way toward making the cave seem more spacious. Hey, everybody gets lucky once in a while.

Besides monitoring the radiation, both outside and inside, Harry and I got together and learned about each other's firearms. He taught me about the Barrett and the STG-58 and I showed him how to strip and clean the Super Match. Since the Mini-14s we had put up for the kids were very similar to the M1A, we didn't bother with those. The same applied to the Browning's. As far as the cowboy guns went there was little to show, move the lever down to eject the spent cartridge move it back up to chamber the next. The SAA revolvers were easy, remove the cylinder and clean it and the barrel and then reassemble.

The Other Shoe – Chapter 7

Those cowboy guns might come in handy, if we were forced to go back to riding horses. We'd have to find more horses though, plus feed and grain; or, maybe not, we have to wait and see. I'd better slow down and take things as they come and quit worrying so much. That's pretty hard when it's your first GTW. Presumably, it would also be the last; all people had to do was look around and see what this one brought. It was going to be a long time before we restored industry, large farming operations, reestablished the government and all that followed TEOCAWKI.

For now, we had my guerilla garden and our stored food. We'd have to wait a while to hunt deer, turkeys and feral hogs. We weren't next door to, or on the shore of, a lake, so fishing would be a challenge. We'd be able to round up a rototiller and plant a garden using Harry's and my collection of heirloom seeds. A six acre piece of ground wouldn't be all that hard to defend for the most part.

As hard as I tried, I couldn't help but think about the possibilities. We'd have to recover the horses, get worms, rabbits, chickens and fish and possibly give some thought to putting in a greenhouse. All things we should have had done before the crap hit the fan. We left the horses boarded and didn't get the rabbits, worms and fish because we lived in town and it would have meant one or two round trips to the acreage daily. We could have gotten the rabbits, etc. and kept them in Licking, but hadn't. We wouldn't have made it to the property if we had to take the time to move them. We should have had them and simply taken off work when the news about India and Pakistan came down. As they say, hindsight is 20/20.

I checked, the PV panels were still charging the batteries and they had a full charge. We had enough meat, frozen and canned to have meat for every meal while we sheltered. Harry smoked and only brought a carton of smokes with him, so I drug out the Marl-boros I put up as trade goods to tide him over. I'd quit smoking when I'd gotten out of the Corps, but there wasn't a better time to resume, so I got out the Kool 100s I put up for the same reason. The ladies said we were limited to smoking in the storage room. I guess it beats them telling us to go outside.

There's another example of the government telling us how to live our lives. Over the last quarter of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st, they raised taxes on cigarettes and tobacco products to unreasonable levels and banned smoking about anywhere except your home. Some states banned smoking anywhere there were children under a certain age. One of the last holdouts had been our state, Missouri, but even they succumbed to the lure of higher tax revenues.

Sally did most of the cooking and she and I read up on everything we could find about delivering babies. That included topics like breech birth, delivering the placenta and other uninteresting topics. The decay of radiation was very close to the projected spreadsheet readings allowing us to be confident that we'd be below 100mR around 68

days. We discussed the two choices we had, take Lynn to Licking at 68 days or deliver the twin ourselves. After much consideration, we opted for the latter.

Our thinking was that the risk of exposing the babies and Lynn to radiation was far worse than our delivering the babies. We had no assurance that we could find a living doctor in Licking. With it only being 15 miles south of our location and lacking a major Civil Defense Shelter, the odds against finding one were simply too great. We put what we knew and read above taking that risk. The other option would have been for Harry and me to go to Licking, find a doctor and bring him or her back. I didn't have Tyvek suits or gas masks. We were in the same boat as many other preppers, more needs and wants than money to buy them.

That said we could shelter for as long as it took for the radiation level to fall to where we wouldn't need them. With Lynn's second delivery coming only 15 months after her first, it should be easier. Chuck and Cindy were just about 1 year old and just beginning to pull themselves up, hence not toddlers. Another improvement we'd discussed was installing a raised floor in the cave and we hadn't gotten around to that either. The barn for the livestock took priority over the cave floor and there were only so many free hours in a week.

Typically, according to what I'd read, learning to walk came sometime in the 12 months to 18 months stage. Potty training usually didn't begin before 18 months. We had two cribs, the fold up traveling kind, which we were using for the babies. When Lynn delivered, we'd need someplace for the new twins, maybe a padded drawer until we could salvage two additional cribs. It was going to be a challenge any way you looked at it with four in diapers and cribs. We'd probably have four still on bottles for a short while; because kids couldn't really handle a cup well before 18 months. Next, as we tried to adjust to living in a brave new world, or the aftermath, call it what you will, we'd have two children going through the terrible 2s.

After two weeks, I hooked up the Hallicrafters and the Icom IC-9100H to see how others were making out. Most everyone we heard was in a rural location. Their only problem had been dealing with fallout and those damned MZBs. You could take it to the bank that a major disaster of any kind would bring out the best in some people and the worst in others. We were so far off the beaten path I doubted anyone would find us. Although I did think I'd heard someone pounding on the blast door shortly after Harry and I got back. It was faint and soon stopped so it could have been my imagination. I hadn't opened the door and checked because we were nearly at capacity and we hadn't invited anyone else to use the shelter.

Back to the radio... most of the hams were rural and had some kind of power for their radios; either generators or maybe PV panels and batteries. I didn't know because we only listened trying to piece it all together. It was during this time, two weeks up to the time that Lynn delivered, that we learned much of what happened and I reported earlier. One east coast ham reported he'd been in contact with someone he knew in Israel. Some on the outskirts of major cities reported the number of strikes and general condi-

tion of the area. Most times it wasn't good news and we started keeping a list of the locations struck by one or more nuclear weapons. It proved to be more than we thought possible. One guy, obviously military, revealed that both Russia and China had nuked the US. He went on to list some of the other countries they'd struck. I assumed military because he seemed to be in the know. I made an exception and visited with him, telling him I was a Marine living in Missouri and that it appeared that Kansas City and Whiteman AFB had been hit. We were assuming that they probably hit St. Louis as well.

He confirmed St. Louis and began to share his list of cities. Once or twice I had to ask him to slow down, I couldn't write that fast. When he finished his list, he went on to say he was in Colorado and in the Air Force, declining to give us his exact location or name. Harry and I later speculated he was somewhere near Colorado Springs. We didn't hear him on the air again; he may have stopped broadcasting or changed frequencies. Another guy we picked up was from Lancaster, California. He said that Edwards AFB and Plant 42 had been nuked. He also mentioned SCE's San Onofre and PG&Es Diablo Canyon, San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco. I realized after he was off the air where Plant 42 was, Palmdale. I wonder... nah, he's bulletproof.

The US had about 100 nuclear power plants. If all 100 were targeted and hit while operating, cleanup after this disaster would take much longer than had the plants not been hit. There would be large quantities of radioactive iodine and cesium as well as radioactive noble gases. This was one of the cases where you needed KI or KIO_3 . It was also a case where access to Prussian Blue was advisable (TOM talked about it in one of his stories). PB helps remove radioactive cesium and thallium from the body after exposure.

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"Ooh, ouch."

"Are you okay Lynn?"

"I hope Sally and you figured it out, it's time; my water just broke"

"You're early, what, three weeks?"

"I think that sometimes happens when you run out of room."

"I'll time them and Sally can check for your dilation."

"Chicken."

"Puck, puck, that's me."

"One centimeter."

And that's how it went for a while; every 45-minute series of contractions expanded her cervix about 1cm. Just shy of 7 hours later, Lynn was ready to deliver. A head began to push its way through and within a minute or so, that seemed like an hour or so, the first baby, a girl delivered. It was a minute or two before the second baby, a boy, delivered. We cleaned them up the best that we could, and washed their eyes out with normal saline, lacking anything else. Then Sally cleaned up the girl while I cleaned up the boy. We added disposable diapers from our only package and wrapped them in blankets.

"You're stuck in a rut, Lynn, we have one girl and one boy. Any idea about names?"

"How about Lynette and Mark?"

"Named after anyone in particular?"

"Some people I met once, nobody special."

"Sounds good to me. We'd better note the date and time so we can record the births when Phelps County is up and running again."

"When we can get to Rolla, you mean."

"Yeah, that too."

"What is the radiation level?"

"It's right at 100mR."

"Does mean I can go out?" Sally asked.

"You can, but I'd rather you didn't," Harry replied.

"Why not?"

"I don't want to lose you to cancer ten years down the road. If we stay another 2 months, the risk will be very small, that's why."

"Once I'm past being engorged, I think I'll breastfeed and supplement with Enfamil. I'm not going to have enough milk for these two, could you get out the Enfamil?"

"You want the shells, bags and Enfamil, right?"

"Don't forget the nipples."

"Uh-duh, right, the feeding tubes."

Since we were short the two cribs, rather than use a cardboard box because we didn't have any drawers to pad, we took turns sleeping. Lynn slept at night, except when she had to feed the new babies and I slept during the day. I made sure that she got enough sleep, because waking up at night to feed babies generally deprived the sleeping mother of sleep. As soon as one of them would fuss, I got busy making up the bottles she was using to supplement and she fed then in turn followed by me feeding them each the bottle.

Once we had them burped, diapered and lulled back to sleep, she'd lay back down until the next time. On average the next time was about 3 hours away. Lynn would clean the diapers and generally run the washer. I'd dry and fold them. Were it not for the immediate situation, I'd have probably slept through the night, just as I'd done with Chuck and Cindy.

In the present situation, someone had to be awake at all times, just in case, and it worked out well. It is said that babies sometimes get their days and nights mixed up. Hell, I was getting my days and nights mixed up. However, the time passed and soon enough, the radiation was down to 49mR/hr per the spreadsheet and about the same on the CD V-717. On the meter, that was the end of one range and the book said that you couldn't trust the first and last 10% of the range.

Harry and I put on N-95 masks, collected our firearms and the CD V-715 and unlocked the blast door. I could only get it about halfway open. Whatever was on the other side wasn't hard so we pushed harder and I slipped through sideways. Crap, I did hear knocking, Randy had wanted in the shelter and must have set down right there and died. I moved his body and Harry swung the door wide open.

"Somebody you knew?"

"He was a mooch named Randy Oaks. That's why I put in the camouflage so he wouldn't find the cave."

"He knew you had a cave?"

"I don't know if he knew or not, but he suspected I did because I started out sort of like a hermit living in the cave. The first structure I built was the ice house, the second the smoke house and the third the cabin."

"Let me guess, the fourth structure you built was the barn."

"Considering there are only four structures, I'd say you're close."

"What's the reading?"

"Same as the CD V-717, tell Sally she can come out now."

“What about Lynn and the kids?”

“I’ll bring them out just as soon as the cabin is warmed up.”

“It is a little cold, isn’t it?”

“At least we don’t have any snow.”

“Nuclear winter?”

“Well, the theory has never been disproven. I guess we’ll find out now. I guess I should have asked, what is the setup on your trailer?”

“Everything is propane including the stove, refrigerator, generator and washer and dryer. Well the washer runs on electricity, but the dryer is propane.”

“Is that how it came from the factory?”

“No, we made a few changes.”

“Are your propane bottles full?”

“Yep, 2 100# bottles.”

“So, if we hook up water you’ll be good for a couple of days? I’d like to do any decontamination before we hook up the water and sewer permanently. If we locate you relatively close to the cave you can hook into the propane tank. It’s your choice, because the tank has a wet leg and we can refill your bottles.”

“I think I’ll level it right where it sits. It’s close to the house and the woodpile. Is it ok if we get some firewood for our woodstove?”

“You have a woodstove?”

“Like I said, we made a few changes. It’s a Napoleon Deluxe EPA Pedestal Wood Burning Stove and puts out enough heat to heat the trailer most times.”

“Let me get that fire going in the cabin.”

“Go ahead, I’ll start leveling.”

“Do you need help with the pullouts?”

“Not really unless you want to crank one out. It’s setup as a one man operation. I’ll get it set and get Sally.”

I went to the cabin and started a fire in the wood burning kitchen stove and the fireplace that was the main source of heat. When it warmed up enough, I went after Lynn, Chuck, Cindy, Lynette and Mark. I carried the newborns and Sally and Lynn carried Chuck and Cindy. We would still be going to the cave because it had our only washer and dryer and real hot water heater. Next, I went back and got the cribs. Now we lined two drawers with blankets and used them as temporary cribs. New cribs were back at our home in Licking, still unassembled in the boxes. We were going to have to get down to Licking and we also needed to get up to Rolla and record the births. It might be important, someday.

Harry helped with minor amounts of decontamination around the acreage. He also helped me bury Randy. We discussed going down to Licking and he suggested the sooner the better. I wanted to stop by the house and pick up the cribs, pickup up the horses and take a little bit of time to look for anything that might be of value for our long term survival. I didn't have anything particular in mind; I kept my options open on the subject. The nearest Wal-Mart store probably was the one in Rolla, although there were 6 stores in the general area.

One thing that would make life a lot easier would be diapers and pins. A person never passed up a chance to pick up some ammo, especially if it were match grade. With the barrel with 1 turn in 10, my rifle could shoot most, if not all, of the match grade ammo out there. It wasn't at the top of the list because I had right around 5,000-rounds.

The Mini-14 tactical rifles, fitted to the standard synthetic stocks would be fine for the kids, initially. I planned to keep my eye open for more Garand rifles and M14/M1As. If I found .30-06 ammo, we could reload the clips for the Garand Lynn had inherited. She had 5 sealed ammo cans of the Greek ammo, something she said her Grandfather bought just before he died. The Greek .30-06 ammunition was packaged in 8 round enbloc clips, 6 clips per bandoleer, 4 bandoleers per spam can thus 192 rounds per spam can. I'd have preferred 5,000-rounds not 960, but you had to start somewhere.

We got the horses and tack after we picked up the cribs and he loaned us a 4 stall trailer saying he wanted it back. I asked about what they had done when the fallout was high and he said they'd sheltered in their storm shelter which doubled as a cold cellar. They weren't sure how long to stay, but after 6 weeks, couldn't stand it anymore because of the portable toilet and had bailed out. I wasn't totally sure, but figured they'd be okay.

Coming back through Licking, we saw our first town survivor. She had obvious signs of radiation poisoning, half her hair was gone, her gums were bleeding, etc. We asked and she said they had shelter in a building basement for about 3 weeks. We asked about other survivors and she said there had been nearly 100 people in the basement, but she had no idea where they went.

We didn't find diapers or pins, so we went to the grocery store and cleaned out the remaining disposable diapers, regardless of size. While we were at it, we cleaned out the

toilet paper, coffee, tea, baby food and salt. We took more than that, filling the bed of the Chevy, but I won't bore you with the details. Most of the diapers were the larger sizes so perhaps Lynn could use them on Chuck and Cindy and use the cloth diapers on the newborns after she ran out of the smaller size diapers. We tarped the load and headed home.

The first thing we did when we got back was to unload the pickup and the second was to assemble the cribs. Chuck and Cindy got the full sized cribs and Lynette and Mark the travel cribs. I put a 30-gallon trash can near the front door to hold the dirty disposable diapers and figured I would bury them when the can was full or it was warmer, whichever came first.

Since Harry and Sally had one of those stacked washer/dryer combos, Lynn used theirs instead of the one in the cave. We moved the radio equipment and radiological instruments from the cave and locked it down. The only time we would go in it was to procure more supplies.

"What do you think, Hank? Wait a few weeks for those with radiation sickness to die off and then go back to Licking for salvaging operations?"

"We can start at our house; we didn't get all of the canned goods moved."

"We'd better do that tomorrow. You can get anything you overlooked in your rush to get to the shelter."

"We need to take the horse trailer back too."

"You brought the horses?" Lynn asked. "Are they okay?"

"Seemed to be. Apparently some breeds of animals are more resistant to radiation than humans."

"It's a shame that Sally and I don't have horses and tack."

"Can you buy some? I guess what I'm saying is do you have a little gold and silver put back for emergencies?"

"I've been at this prepping thing for at least as long as you have, of course I do."

"I'd be willing to bet that 2 ounces of gold would buy you a fine mare or stallion. Four ounces a pair and some rolls of silver halves, quarters or dimes, the tack."

"Where?"

“The guy who boarded our horses was boarding horses for several people in town. Plus he had his own small herd. He might be willing to sell two of his own betting on the outcome that some of townspeople who owned horses didn’t survive.”

“And with possession being 9 points of the law...”

“Exactly.”

We took the trailer back the next morning and began negotiating. We got a stallion and mare, both 5 year olds, and tack which included good saddles, saddlebags, rifle scabbards and even lariats; the whole nine yards, in a manner of speaking, for three ounces of gold. We left there and went to first our house and then Harry’s. I cleaned out every scrap of food and more clothes. Harry did the same. We took the time to board up the houses and add hasps and padlocks to the doors. We used a matching set of 6 padlocks so any one of the twelve keys in the set would open both homes.

“Are you going to take a day off Hank? You’ve been on a dead run since we came out of the cave.”

“I suppose I should, tomorrow is Sunday. Even God rested on the 7th day.”

“Sally has been helping with the babies, but I’m worn to a frazzle. I guess I wasn’t mentally prepared for 4 in diapers.”

When we got to Rolla, our first stop was Wal-Mart and I got both sizes of Kushies reusable diapers and every roll of liner they had in stock. It was a recent addition to the store, added just before the war. The liner allowed you to put to the solid waste in the trash can and wash the diaper. The label said that they weren’t recommended for septic systems. We also did fairly well in their sporting goods department, primarily shotgun and .22LR ammo. Finally, we went to the County Seat to attempt to register the children’s births. The building was unlocked, but empty. We located the County Recorder’s office and put a copy of the birth information in the inbox. If anyone showed up later, they could sort it out.

There were several grocery stores in Rolla, many of which had been well picked over. We checked each one, salvaging anything left that we could use. There was, for example, at least some toilet paper in every store as well as Kleenex, an acceptable substitute in an emergency. We found enough goods to require a trailer and borrowed a U-Haul, packing it full. We took what we’d gathered up and returned home.

“Did you get the births registered?”

“There was no one in the County Recorder’s office so I left the information in an inbox. We got these miraculous non-disposable diapers in two sizes with liners. They must be something new for this store. Harry and I did the grocery stores and had to get a U-Haul to bring back what we found. They’d been picked over, but not by any preppers. Pep-

pers would have taken all of the toilet paper and Kleenex. In fact, had they the time, they'd have cleaned out the stores, starting with the one with the most merchandise.”

“Did you pick up any more firearms?”

“Didn't see anything we couldn't live without. However, we took every cartridge we have firearms for, especially more ammunition for your Garand rifle.”

“Do you plan on reloading the enbloc clips?”

“That was the general idea, yes. If we can find any more of the loaded ammo, I'll grab it in a heartbeat. I didn't look into reloading equipment because I've never reloaded before. We may collect the supplies like primers, powder and bullets in case we run into someone who does reload.”

“I half assumed that you'd head for the Missouri National Guard supply depot and bring home a bunch of military ordnance.”

“I don't know where it is. If I did, I just might go looking.”

“Couldn't you go to Independence and get ammo from the Lake City plant?”

“We could do that and probably will. However, I was thinking more along the lines of some of the military only ordnance.”

“Such as?”

“M18 Claymore mines, M72 LAW rockets, assorted hand grenades including offensive, defensive and various other types. We might be able to pick up a light, medium or heavy machine gun or three.”

“Boys and their toys.”

“Lynn, I was a Marine and the saying is once a Marine, always a Marine. It's not as if I had to depend on what I saw in *The Enforcer* to be familiar with the LAW. We also had training on the Claymore and hand grenades. My training isn't so outdated that I couldn't use the latest variations of those weapons. I think Harry was in the Army, but I don't know that for sure. I don't know if he saw combat or not.”

o

“Yes, I was in the Army, 1st Battalion (Ranger). I saw action in Urgent Fury (Grenada) and Just Cause (Panama). They changed our outfit from an Infantry Regiment to a Ranger Regiment, but it was only a name change. That's the extent of my combat experience.”

The Other Shoe – Chapter 8

“I was telling Lynn that I thought you were in the Army, but didn’t realize that you were a Ranger. That’s not only good, it’s outstanding. Anything I know the Marine Corps way of doing, you know the Ranger way of doing. Between us, if pushed, we can kick butt and take names.”

“Plus we have a .50 caliber and a .30 caliber sniper rifle. We should be able to reach out and slap ‘em upside the face without getting our hands dirty.”

“Lynn mentioned Lake City Ammo Plant in Independence. I don’t suppose you know where the Missouri Guard had their ammo distribution point, do you?”

“Fraid not. Two places come to mind, Springfield and Jeff City.”

“I was thinking Ft. Leonard Wood.”

“Well, we can try all three, if you want.”

“It would be nice to do it before it starts snowing.”

“Are you still worried about nuclear winter?”

“Like I said before, the theory has never been disproven.”

“What do you want to take if we go?”

“I was thinking we’d go through Rolla and get a second U-Haul trailer and we could get two trailer and pickup loads and be done with it.”

“Just what did you have in mind to get?”

“Machineguns; light, medium or heavy with plenty of ammo. LAW rockets or AT4s depending on what is available. M18A1 Claymore mines. M67 and M61 fragmentation grenades, Mk3A2 concussion grenades, AN-M14 TH3 Thermate and various colors of smoke.”

“You think they still have any of the M61 grenades? I thought they had been updated with the M67.”

“Who knows what you’ll find laying around? The only branch of service to employ the LAW these days is the Corps. But, in the past, the Army used them. I know that the Lake City plant produces everything up to and including 20mm ammo, so regardless of what caliber machineguns we take, we should find some ammo. My first choice would be a M2HB and second would be the M240. Didn’t much care for the SAW.”

“Did you carry one?”

“I did for a while. As much as I disliked my M16, I preferred it to the SAW. We wore the SAWs out and were down to using duct tape to hold them together.”

“But the Ma Deuce is a heavy brute.”

“I know, around 128 pounds plus ammo. You don’t carry it on a shoulder strap, though. We’d need fixed emplacements for those.”

“George Patton said...”

“...*fixed fortifications are monuments to man’s stupidity*. I heard that. We only have 4 people and 4 young children. We either attract more people or go with something big enough to do the job.”

“When do you want to go?”

“Tuesday?”

o

“How long will you be gone?”

“I have no idea. First, we have to locate the Guard supply depot. We’re going to check Ft. Leonard Wood first and Jefferson City second, there has to be at least an armory. Then, we’re going to Independence. If we haven’t found the supply depot, we’ll try Springfield. For all I know, it could be up near St. Louis.”

“A week, maybe?”

“I sure hope so; I don’t like the idea of leaving Sally, you and the kids here alone.”

“If anything that looks like trouble comes along, we’ll move back to the cave.”

“One of you should be watching all of the time.”

“We can’t do that; not with only the two of us.”

“I’d feel better knowing you and the kids were safe. How about moving back to the cave before we leave?”

“Did you pick up any tranquilizers when you were in Rolla?”

“As a matter of fact, yes. Xanax in 0.25mg, 0.50mg, 1.0mg and 2.0mg.”

“I’ll start Sally on the small one and work up to whatever size it takes.”

“I can’t believe it would take more than 0.50mg. I’d start with 0.25mg and up it to 0.50mg if they’re not powerful enough.”

“Ok, Hank, I’ll start with 0.25mg.”

On Monday we did all the chores we needed to get out of the way and moved the ladies back to the cave. Lynn started Sally on the smallest pill and she chilled out without getting too sleepy. We fueled everything and took spare cans of fuel, more for Harry’s sake than mine. We took our pistols, shotguns, .30 caliber rifles and the Harry’s Barrett with some of the Mk211. We got a second trailer in Rolla and headed for the Fort, just a ways on country roads.

We found the depot. We got an M240 and a M2HB both with the spare barrel. There were 4 NIB M4s and as much as I disliked the rifle, we took them anyway, along with new magazines, magazine rebuild kits and slings. They had all kinds of play pretties. Enough to let us play soldier for nearly forever. But, you say, this is not a game.

We went north from Jefferson City. We found a fuel terminal there and made note of one source of gasoline and diesel. Continuing north we spied two tankers, both loaded, one all diesel and the second all gas. We also saw two Wal-Mart trucks both locked, so presumably loaded. West bound on I-70 we found more tankers and one grocery semi, again full tanks or padlock cargo box. Vital information, we agreed and wrote down the mile markers.

In Independence, we located the ammo plant and began loading ammo. M118LR for the .30 caliber rifles; belted .30 and .50 caliber ammo, by the crate load. Although the trailers weren’t full, they were fully loaded. Harry and I discussed our next destination and decided to go home. We survived the nuclear attack; I figured everything after that was a bonus. I momentarily lost track of Lynn and our four kids.

“You’re back?”

“Didn’t take as long as I thought it might.”

“Were did you go?”

“Jefferson City, Independence and Ft. Leonard Wood.”

“Did you get everything you were looking for?”

“We even got extras. We have 4 NIB M4 carbines for the kids, a pair each of M240s and M2HBs, about 4 tons of ammo, the mines, rockets and grenades. Oh, I picked up some M50 Joint Service General Purpose Masks with extra canisters.”

“Why would we need those now?”

“So we can use the tear gas grenades.”

“What all did you get?”

“Some of everything? They had flash bangs and the CS tear gas grenades so why not?”

◦

What’s the significance of Lufthansa Flight 181? Just another plane hijacking where GS-9 rescued the hostages? Correct. However, GS-9 had help from 2 SAS operatives who supplied the flash bang grenades in their first use in a hostage rescue situation. The next time they used them was in the Iranian Embassy hostage crisis. Set the building on fire, but they rescued the hostages. Got all 6 hostage takers, lost one hostage.

Remember that. In 40-50 years when they bring back games shows, you might win 1 million dollars.

◦

“Can we come out of the cave now? Or, do you have somewhere else to go?”

“Well, we might go cut some firewood, but we’d be within CB radio range.”

“Can’t you just stay home and help for a while? Once Sally built up a blood level of the Xanax 0.25mg, she was loop-de-loop. I basically ended up taking care of 5 children rather than 4. I gave up and just locked the blast door.”

“I can’t do that. Lynn, I’m convinced of the nuclear winter theory and with Harry and Sally using firewood, I’m not totally sure we won’t run out. Since we don’t have the snow yet, I just thought now was the best time to harvest 3 or 4 standing dead trees and haul them back here. It won’t take nearly as long because I have Harry to help.”

“I hope we do have a nuclear winter. At least you’ll be snowed in and not out and about. Okay. Harvest your wood, but enough is enough. You stay home after that.”

“Well, there’s something I didn’t tell you.”

“More good news?”

“In a way, yes. North of Jefferson City we found two loaded tankers on US 63, one gas and one diesel. We also found two Wal-Mart delivery trucks, presumably loaded. On I-70, we found two more tankers, both 50/50 loads of gas and diesel and a locked grocery delivery truck. We’re going to need that fuel, probably before winter ends. Oh, there’s a fuel distribution terminal in Jeff City, too. On the propane side of the issue, Red

Top has what must be a 10,000-gallon tank or larger. They also had more of the larger 1,100-gallon storage tanks.”

“So, what you’re saying is that Harry and you are going salvaging.”

“Sooner or later and remember, the early bird gets the worm.”

“Speaking of which, we never got the rabbits, worms, fish or chickens. What are we going to do about that?”

“Look until we find them? It is kind like that election back in 2008, two choices, neither one of them good. I guess what I’m trying to say is that we simply must recover those tankers. To keep the fuel stable, we need one heck of a lot more PRI-G and PRI-D. There are hundreds of marinas on our 9,999 lakes and mud puddles, so I think we can find it, if we shop around.”

“9,999 lakes and mud puddles?”

“I think Minnesota has more, they claim 10,000.”

“I’m fighting an uphill battle, aren’t I?”

“Off and on for a while, you are, but not in the long run. Once we secure those tankers and a semi-tractor or two to pull them, we will only have to go to the fuel distributors to refill them. We probably need to recover those groceries before a hard freeze sets in or some of the jars will end up broken.”

“Any chance I can agree, but put a condition it?”

“Of course, what is it you want, or what is the condition?”

“We have a large quantity of the 7.62x51mm NATO, now don’t we?”

“Large amount yes, huge amount no. What does that have to do with anything?”

“Since you’re going through Jefferson City, get 6 M1As. One for Sally, one for me and 4 for the kids.”

“What if we have more children?”

“We still would have 8 .223 rifles, wouldn’t we?”

“I’ll get all of the M1As I can find. Springfield Armory also made some M1 Garand’s in 7.62, want me to get any if we find them?”

“Those .30 caliber bullets pierce body armor, right? The M14 was based on the Garand. Of course take them. Beats having them used against us plus having something you might not need beats needing something you don't have.”

“That's a line out of nearly every PAW fiction yarn ever written. So is the idea of doing salvage. There a fine line there, between looting a salvaging. That line that looters will be shot on sight also applies to salvagers. The only difference, I think, is who will do the shooting. It will be LEOs or military in the case of looting and angry locals in the second.”

As far as our diesel usage was concerned, we started off with 10,000-gallons. It had been approximately 135 days since we had been on generator power, not counting the times we shut it down to service it. That was 3,240 hours and at a 50% load, we would have used 4,860-gallons of diesel. We'd need more oil, oil filters, fuel filters and air filters to run it for the long term. We'd also need a second generator to back up the first; in case it broke or simply wore out. The engine was a John Deere model 3029TF150 and with a parts set or two, it could be rebuilt. It was only estimation, but it seemed like we wouldn't get through the winter without more diesel fuel.

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“Pretty good trip Hank.”

“You're right Harry. We still need to make a few trips. We need to recover those four tankers, the 2 Wal-Mart trucks and that sole grocery truck we spotted. Lynn wants us to look for M1A rifles in Jefferson City, too. Then we need to make another trip to Licking and fill and bring back Red Top's propane delivery truck. They had 3 more of the 1,100-gallon propane tanks and it would be nice to have them. If I'm not mistaken, their delivery truck holds 3,000-gallons. We could fill all 3 tanks and go back for a second load. What else? Oh, I remember another Kohler 30REOZJB generator, engine rebuild kits and new alternator heads. We might try to find spare batteries without the electrolyte.”

“Is that all?”

“Not really. We don't have enough firewood to last the entire winter.”

“I don't suppose anyone has called you a slave driver have they?”

“We would have had enough firewood with only us using it. I don't begrudge you the firewood, not one bit. However, if we don't want to run out, we'll have to cut more. I heat with wood, so I don't have much choice.”

“We've been heating almost exclusively with the firewood too. I'll be glad to help and you do have a point about the fuels. How much do you estimate we used?”

“Roughly half of our supply, just under 5,000-gallons.”

“If you’re keeping a list, add a new 100 amp generator for our trailer. If we’re going to be salvaging, you should salvage a hot water heater, window air conditioner and compact washer/dryer laundry combo. You should have everything in the cabin that you have in the cave.”

“I suppose we could move back to Licking.”

“Be my guest, Sally and I are staying here come hell or high-water.”

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We had our trials and tribulations recovering the trucks and it revolved around finding running semi tractors. Patience prevailed and within two weeks we had the 4 tankers and 3 cargo trailers to the acreage. The firearms Lynn wanted were available. Two were the Loaded model and 4 the standard model. We took the rifles, cleaning kits, slings, two bipods plus all of the ammo and reloading supplies in the store. The hot water heater was a propane fueled, 40-gallon unit and the stacked washer/dryer combo was the largest size we could find. We brought back drums of oil because an oil change required 8 quarts.

Our final destination was Licking where we made off with his last two, not three, propane tanks. We mounted one by the cabin and the second by the trailer. We drove back a full delivery truck, filled the two new tanks and topped off the old tank. We returned to Licking and topped off the tank. Finally, we were ready to cut the firewood. With two of us working on it and using Harry’s chainsaw, we made short work of felling three large Hickory trees and 3 very large red oak trees. Once we had the logs and usable branches back to the acreage, we could cut and split the firewood at our leisure. The Forest Service could clean up the trash. It is biodegradable, right?

“Home to stay or just visiting?”

“We’ll have to cut and split the firewood. That won’t keep me from lending a helping hand on a continuing basis. Does that washer/dryer combo work ok?”

“It is nice not having to lug the dirty laundry to Sally’s or the cave. How much firewood did you harvest?”

“Won’t know until it is cut and stacked; however, we cut 3 Hickories and 3 red oaks. Would it be ok if I spent 2-3 hours a day cutting and splitting firewood while the kids are sleeping?”

“Not on your life. You do it while they’re awake. It might be better if you did all of the cutting first followed by the splitting. We’ll have to see how loud the splitter’s engine is in the cabin before I decide when you should use it. Think about it; I get them down and

asleep, and then you fire up the chainsaw or splitter and they're wide awake and screaming. We can use some of the sawn limbs in the fireplace."

"You need a rocking chair, don't you?"

"It sure would be nice, I'll admit that. Why, are you going to find me one?"

"I saw one in Rolla. It even had the removable cushions."

"We are a bit short on seating; get a recliner or an overstuffed chair for you."

"I get Harry and we'll go now. You can begin breaking it in right away."

"Thank you."

After we had the Lazy Boy and the rocking chair in the cabin, Harry and I began cutting wood. I kept my eye on my watch since the kids were usually put down after lunch. Harry was just flying along cutting up the limbs, but the thick logs took much longer to section. I had two logs cut when Lynn called me for lunch."

"How did it go?"

"Harry is close to finishing off the limbs. I only got two logs sectioned and ready to split. Looks like it may go 1½ cords per log."

"Hickory or red oak?"

"Hickory."

"I'm putting the kids down."

"Okay, I'll quit and listen to the radio for a while. I'll wear the headphones."

As I listened to various hams, I kept my eye on the alphabetical list of destroyed cities and military installations. When someone mentioned a site not on the list, I added it. I had the list on my laptop in a spreadsheet and would go back later and update the list. The devastation was far more widespread than our initial indications suggested. Just about every city with a population of 200,000 or more had taken a hit, as had countless military installations.

The firewood preparation continued for 2-3 hours every morning. Harry had the limbs cut up and the trash stacked to burn off. He started splitting the logs as I continued to cut them to 16" pieces. Eventually, he caught up to me and took a morning off to do odds and ends like checking over the tack he bought from the stable. He'd done his own firearm shopping in Jefferson City with an eye towards getting lever action rifles and

single action revolvers. He found Vaquero revolvers in .45 Colt and Marlin 1894 rifles in the same caliber. There were enough 1894's in .45 Colt for me to get 6.

It wasn't some phase we were going through, acquiring lever action rifles. It's pretty hard to put a semi-auto rifle in a scabbard with a 20-round magazine sticking out. The single action revolvers weren't the best choice because they only held 6 shots and took time to reload. Our pistols could go in the saddle bags with extra magazines.

We were nearly two weeks cutting, splitting and stacking the firewood. We harvested 10 cords. Our list of unaccomplished tasks was growing shorter and this time items were now chickens, rabbits, worms and fish. We went farm to farm until we found some chickens scratching out a living in a fenced in area. We added to our pool of livestock. We continued looking, rabbits being next on our list. When we found rabbits, we also found worms and fish plus a recently deceased prepper.

He'd been riddled with gun fire and was maybe a week dead. He didn't go alone, he took some of those bastards with him. We buried him and ignored the MZBs bodies; the feral dogs have to eat. After assuring ourselves that he'd been alone, we recovered his unused goods. He seemed to prefer Mountain House. His firearm collection, while not huge, was impressive. He had the prerequisite shotgun, the 590A1, the loaded M1A, an M1911, a Ruger Mark II, a Ruger 10/22 and a HK-417. With that he had 6 50-round drum magazines, a dozen 20-round magazines and an H&K suppressor.

It was legal because he had the badge, he was a Deputy Sheriff. The Deputy's service pistol was a .40 S&W and if he had a service rifle or shotgun, they were probably at the Sheriff's lockup. We hadn't planned on this, but were pulling trailers since we weren't sure what we might find when it came to livestock. We filled one trailer with the Deputy's stuff and headed towards home, checking farms as we went. We found a sow with a litter of newborn pigs. She was pure trouble and we maneuvered the trailer to the barn door and grabbed some piglets putting them in the trailer. She was in like a flash and we closed the trailer and we got the remainder of the piglets to reunite the family.

Apparently the sow didn't care for the trailer; when we got to the barn and back up to it, she bolted with her babies trailing behind her. The Deputy's rabbits, worms and fish setup was better than the one Lynn and I had, so we used his and his rabbit food. We started to get eggs almost immediately and they were a welcome treat. However, if you eat the eggs, you eliminate your future chicken crop and we soon stopped so the hens could set.

The only critter we didn't have now was beef. One bull and a pair of heifers could keep us in meat and allow us to increase our herd. We'd need more hay and grain because this place wasn't designed with livestock in mind. It took a few days to find live heifers and more days to find a young bull. We pulled back wagons of grain and loads of hay to supplement our existing supplies. And finally, it came time to sit on our butts and be grateful we were alive. It was fun trying to connect a wagon tongue to a ball hitch. We finally just removed the ball and dropped in a large bolt.

With our final acquisition, the barn was full. If we expanded herds, we'd have to expand the barn. A project for when it warmed up. The sow needed a boar, let's say for companionship. We found a lot of barrows before we found a boar. We took the barrows anyway because we could butcher them when they reached 250 pounds and make hams, bacon and pork chops. I'd smoke the picnics too and we'd get extra *ham*.

There were two ways to make ham, the dry cure and the wet cure. It was easier and quicker to brine (wet) cure the pork. We could add or not add sugar and get sugar cured ham for special occasions. The only thing I'd ever butchered was a deer and butchering hogs was far different according to Harry because you cut the meat differently. The pork loin went from the rib steak portion of the beef to the porterhouse portion of the beef. Modern bacon was usually made from the belly and the ham and picnic could be smoked or served fresh. What was left over went into sausage or plain or smoked hocks. I wanted sausage patties and had Emeril's recipe on the laptop:

- 2 pounds pork shoulder or butt, cut into 1-inch cubes
- ½ pound pork fat, cubed
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh sage leaves
- 3 tablespoons minced green onions
- 1 tablespoon Essence, recipe follows
- 2½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic

Essence was made as follows:

- 2 1/2 tablespoons paprika
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme

The yield was about 2½ pounds of pork sausage. I figured to try it out and eliminate anything we didn't like; the cayenne pepper comes to mind. Plenty of time for that, the hogs weren't ready to butcher.

That boar we got sure had a nasty disposition. He should get along great with the sow and her equally nasty disposition. Once the pigs were weaned, she ignored them and went looking for her male companion. When the heifers came into estrus, the bull expanded his family. We got no snow and despite the cold, had an acre rototilled, rocks removed and then rototilled in some fertilizer. Sure would have been nice to have a greenhouse, Lynn started plants in small fiber pots and we had pots all over the house.

The Other Shoe – Chapter 9

The pots were 3” round and sold for around \$110 per case of 1,500. That one case would have to last, unless we could find more. The ground was ready for the plants. The plants weren’t ready for the ground and it wasn’t warm enough to plant for a few weeks. I’m beginning to believe that we should have gotten 4” pots.

We’d had exactly one visitor, since the war started and he’s buried over yonder. When time permitted we installed the fighting positions, installing one machinegun in each. We also added a box of grenades, mostly defensive, and whatever ammo the person assigned to the hole would need for their personal weapons. On nice days, we’d back off from the bluff and use it as a backstop for practice session.

There was supposed to be an important announcement on the radio at 8pm. We ate together, got an after dinner drink and tuned on the radio.

My fellow Americans, (he needs a new line)

Recently our country was attacked in a first strike reminiscent of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Initial estimates indicate that nearly 400 cities and most military installations were attacked. The countries behind this dastardly attack were Russia and China. We retaliated warhead for warhead. As it stands at the moment, both China and Russia fared far worse than we did.

I won’t kid you, our economy and our very infrastructure has been nearly wiped out. We estimate the cleanup will take years. Those of you hearing my voice are requested to offer all assistance at the local level. To the extent possible, we will do what we can to ensure that no American goes without food and clean water. Medical treatment is in a fragile state and health care officials are only treating the most seriously injured people who present any opportunity of surviving. Expect to see military convoys of food and water sometime in the next six weeks.

We launched all actively deployed missiles and were preparing to begin drawing down our stored weapons when the attacks stopped. I cannot tell you what the coming days will bring, certainly hardships on a massive scale. If you have extra food, please share it with your neighbors, it will be replaced where possible or you will receive ample compensation.

Thank you and goodnight.

ATM, it seems as if those PAW fiction writers got it right, stay in your shelter until it’s safe to come out, do some salvaging, plan ahead some like making sure you have enough firewood and other fuels; start thinking about growing some kind of garden, either in a greenhouse or on your available land. The primary problem as I saw it was that most people weren’t preppers, hence had probably never read a PAW fiction story.

They had, at most a week or two worth of groceries, no shelter and no idea how to make one in a hurry because they'd never heard of Cresson Kearney.

Neither had they dropped a grand or so at Radmeters4U to get the necessary radiation sensing equipment that had been calibrated and was reasonably accurate. Even if they had, what was the difference between a Gray, a Sievert and Röntgen? One Sievert was equal to 100REM. One Gray was equal to 100Rad. They meant the same thing provided the Q factor, whatever that was, was equal to one. It was important only because scientists spoke in terms of Sieverts and Grays while the equipment Radmeters4U sold was calibrated in Röntgens.

But then, most of them didn't have the equipment rendering the issue moot. There had been enough movies on the subject of radioactive fallout, for example *The Day After*, so that many people knew to shelter. Many probably believe the 343 hours or two-week rule. You can't always come out of the shelter at two weeks; it was simply a guideline that assumed a peak level of 100R. Weapons generally created a peak level at ground zero of 3,000R/hr one hour after the radiation settles down.

Assuming they managed to survive and come out of the shelter, but still weren't preppers, they might be a little hungry; don't you agree? Stop and consider the tools available to them in their quest to satisfy their appetites. Their vehicle is probably a late model with more electronics than a TV. That puts them on foot. Well they'll just run down to the market and buy, beg, borrow or steal some food. Say that could be dangerous, better take along the shotgun, pistol, revolver or rifle used for hunting and self-defense.

It quickly becomes a way of life, borrowing or stealing, and it doesn't stop with food. If they find a vehicle that will run, they need fuel and none of the pumps work. They fail to distinguish between taking abandoned property and property in the possession of others, *hey my gun will persuade them to share*. My share, everything you got. Don't like it? Blam.

Law Enforcement is not really in any better shape to deal with a disaster like a GTW than anyone else. They have late model cars, families to take care of and more fires to put out than they have water. Some police and sheriff departments are very small with barely enough sworn officers to do the job in the best of times. If the fatality rate approaches 50%, how many people will they have available to help their fellow citizens? Not enough, for sure. They'd be lucky if they had enough staff to investigate homicides and now the rules have changed and homicides seem to happen frequently.

Somewhere along the line Survivalist became a dirty word. Maybe because of the militant militias, who knows? So survivalists who had no intention of overthrowing the government changed their titles and became preppers; same people, same plans, same attitudes. They faded to black, below the radar and still did their thing. They were well informed, watching the local, state, national and world scene. They watched food production in times of abundance and shortage. They watched the price of oil in the same manner. Oil was just one of many commodities they kept an eye on.

The bottom line was that they got as ready as they could afford to be. Not that they expected law and order to be restored anytime soon in the case of something like a GTW, but they prepared, nonetheless. Then, the government finally shows its head and has the nerve to suggest you give away all of your hard earned, carefully stored, food. Kiss my butt Mr. President, sir. Give them your food because they were stupid and didn't prepare. Why do you think it's called *Preparedness*? I'll decide who I help and under what circumstances, thank you very much.

o

The Lone Ranger (2 spaced gunshots) A fiery horse with a speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty 'Hi-Yo, Silver!' (multiple gunshots) The Lone Ranger! Hi-Yo, Silver, Away! With his faithful Indian companion Tonto the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early west. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. The Lone Ranger rides again. Wait, check that, Clayton Moore died in 1999 and Jay Silverheels died in 1980.

Besides who would talk to a horse that way? Hi-yo? Get real!

Although we had running vehicles and an ample supply of fuel, for now, our needs were few. After the early salvaging trips, we could see little reason to go anywhere. Until, someone brought up the subject of our getting a green house. I recalled from a PAW story that there was a large greenhouse manufacturer in Texas. Texas is mighty big and a long way away. But, a greenhouse is simply a building with transparent siding and roof. It lets the available sunlight in and warms the inside.

The sun was shining, but not as brightly. Well, plan B called for grow lights and a heater of some kind. It was easy enough to get some lumber, just help ourselves. It was the Plexiglas or Lexan that would present the first problem. We could use glass, but it was very heavy meaning heavier construction. Plus, we'd still have to find it.

"How big of a greenhouse are you planning?"

"As big as we can build from the available materials. We'll make it 8' high at the wall and put in a steep roof, say a 1 in 1 pitch, 45°."

"Can you calculate that?"

"Sure, a squared plus b squared equals c squared. For example, say the greenhouse is 20' wide. The middle would be 10' and rise 10'. Square the numbers add them together and you have 200. The square root of 200 is 14.14'. So, for every 4' section of a 20' wide greenhouse, we'd need 6 4'x8' sheets of siding. A square greenhouse 20' square would require 30 sheets, not counting the ends. The ends would require another 5 sheets wide plus about 3 sheets high, call it 8 more sheets. The whole building would need 46 sheets at 20' square or 76 sheets at 20'x40'."

“Where would you get the siding?”

“We could look in Rolla, but I think the best bet would be Jefferson City. Second best would be Kansas City or St. Louis. They were both nuked and I’d rather avoid them if we can.”

We dinked around looking at various ways to design the greenhouse and kept coming back to the plan for a 20’ wide building. Harry had brought back a Jefferson City phone book and we checked the Yellow Pages. He said that years ago AT&T had a theme, *Let your fingers do the walking* to promote their Yellow Pages. He also had a Rolla phone book. Once we decided on where we’d look for the materials, including electrical wholesalers, we gave our wives a hug and a kiss and took off looking.

We started in Jefferson City because the amount of Plexiglas or Lexan we found would determine how much lumber we’d need. We found enough of the Plexiglas and Lexan to build a bigger greenhouse since it was simply a matter of adding to the length. From the quantity of plastic we could also calculate the number of fixtures. When it came to bulbs, we started with 4’ grow lights and filled in the empty corners with a 50/50 mix of warm and cool white.

We were going to use 2x6s for the roof rafters and joists. Wall construction would be standard 2x4s. The doors would be whatever pre-hung doors we could find; they didn’t need to be special. We added all of our lumber requirements up for the beams, joists, rafters, sills, plates and studs and then added 10%, just in case. We got the lumber in Rolla together with the four doors, a pair on each end, and several boxes of nails. We figured *what the heck* and got new hammers.

We first used a truck load of Sackrete to pour footings after we installed a water pipe. It didn’t really take that much longer for the first stage of framing, the stud walls. Next, we made a pattern and built the roof supports in the form of trusses. Our 40’ long by 20’ wide green house was taking shape when we began to add the trusses 2’ on center. We started at the peak of the roof and put Plexiglas, using screws, down to where the walls were and cut off the excess. The wall panels went up quickly and that took us to the harder part, the ends. It took us nearly as long to do the ends as it had to do the roof.

We added a kerosene heater and warmed it up. Working in relative comfort, we installed the light fixtures and one switch for each row of lights. We started the first row 2’ in from the side and put the rows in 4’ on center meaning we had 5 rows of lights. Electricity wouldn’t be a problem, we were only using 4.8kw. However, the lamps needed up to 3 times as much power to start so it was better to light one row at a time. Then we moved all the plants from the trailer and cabin and got our homes back. The ground was still too cold to plant.

o

Kerosene was available in 2-gallon jugs, but we needed more to run the heater. However, no worries mate, kerosene is mainly used as fuel for jet engines (more technically Avtur, Jet A, Jet A-1, Jet B, JP-4, JP-5, JP-7 or JP-8). The Rolla/Vichy, VIH, airport had Jet-A as well as 100LL, Avgas. All we needed was a few drums and a pump; plus, as it turned out, our rifles.

When we arrived at VIH with our empty 55-gallon drums and a pump with a long intake hose, we didn't notice anyone at the airport. It seemed more like a ghost town. We moved to various locations until we found the cover to a tank of Jet A. It was rather easy to distinguish the difference in smell between kerosene and Avgas. There were six drums on the back of my Chevy and full, they'd probably put me on the frame. The easiest way to fill them was to use a hose from the pump and pump the fuel through the 2" bung. We were on the fifth drum when, zing... a bullet whizzed by Harry's ear.

"See anybody?"

"Not yet."

"I can't tell where the shot came from and we won't know until they shoot again."

"Shut off the pump, Hank, I'm getting under the pickup."

"Good idea, I'll join you."

Zing...ding...zing. A second bullet hit the apron and ricocheted off.

"You got them now?"

"Closer, over by the terminal building, but I don't know exactly where."

Zing...ding...zing. A third bullet hit the apron and ricocheted off followed almost immediately with "Son-of-a-beech that hurt."

"You hit?"

"Sorta. Concrete fragments. I have a gouge or two in my face. I still can't see the SOB doing the shooting."

"I'll move around and check out your face and see if between us, we can spot him."

"Could be a gal. Him is not politically correct."

"Screw PC. Whatever the gender, the shooter isn't half bad."

"I'm just glad for the half."

“Hold still. You won’t need stitches, just some large Band-Aids.”

Zing...ding...zing. A fourth bullet hit the apron and ricocheted off close to where I been moments earlier.

“I see him. Hold on while I set this up. Three hundred and fifteen yards, two clicks should be enough. Hold it, hold it.” Blam “Got him.”

“Not half bad, Hank. Why don’t I finish off filling the drums and you go check out our shooter?”

“Good, the sooner we’re out of here the better.”

Holding my Super Match at low ready, I slowly moved the 300 plus yards to where the shooter was, near the end of the terminal building. Since I couldn’t see him, I slowed down as I neared the corner and moved out a bit so I could see the body. Check that, make that her. I’d just grazed her forehead rendering her unconscious. As I arrived she started to come out of it and I grabbed the Mosin-Nagant model 1891/30. It was a good one, a sniper rifle. Sniper rifles, based on the M1891/30 rifles, hand-picked for accuracy, were issued with scope mounts on the left side of the receiver and with bolt handles bent down.

I began to pat her down, looking for a handgun or holdout. She didn’t like being touched, she slapped my face.

“Why were you shooting at us?”

“I should have hit you, the rifle is accurate enough.”

“Look, you just shot at us and I was checking for a handgun, not feeling you up.”

“My handgun is in the holster on my belt, right side.”

“Give it to me, using only 2 fingers please.”

She handed me the Browning Hi-Power pistol. It looked brand-spanking new.

“Okay, on your feet and move to the truck.”

When she saw the blood on Harry’s face, she said, “Well, I came close.”

“Lady, close only counts in horseshoes, hand grenades and dancing. Just be glad you didn’t kill Harry. I’d have taken that personally and been forced to kill you.”

“What now, I suppose I’m your sex slave.”

"I don't believe my wife would approve of that one bit. You have a husband?"

"Had. As in couldn't get home before the fallout arrived and probably ended up with radiation poisoning."

"Children?"

"None."

"I'm sorry for your loss. The question now is what are we going to do with you?"

"You could just let me go."

"So you can find another rifle and someday shoot us? I don't think so."

"Well, if you keep me, you'll have to feed me unless you plan to starve me to death in which case, you should shoot me now."

"Food isn't a problem."

"Then, what is the problem?"

"Well, look at yourself. I'd say you'd clean up pretty good. You'd be almost as attractive as my wife Lynn and I don't know that she'd like having you around."

*First you say you do, and then you don't,
And then you say you will, and then you won't;
You're undecided now, so what are you gon - na do?*

"That's *Undecided* by the Ames Brothers."

"I thought it was Ray Charles."

"He did it later."

"So what's going to happen to me?"

"Unless Harry objects, I think we'll take you home with us and let our wives decide. You'd better hope that Sally or Lynn don't love us as much as we think they do."

"What's that mean?"

"If they do, you might die the death of 1,000 cuts, administered by their fingernails."

o

In one of his stories, TOM wrote about the underground city in eastern California. He later said he'd lost his reference to the link. I did a search before the war and discovered why TOM couldn't find the link. At this website, you click on 'The Underground City' for the explanation. (socalfunplaces dot com slash topic_desert dot htm) The owners blasted the entrance shut just so TOM and his two Amigos couldn't go there.

o

I noticed a problem with my footwear, but that could keep for the moment. All the way home, I wondered what Lynn and Sally's reactions would be when we showed up with a single, reasonably attractive female. The more thought I gave to it, the more I became concerned. In the end, all Harry and I could do was explain what happened and hope for understanding spouses. We put her Russian rifle and Belgian pistol in the back with the drums of Jet A and headed home. She was sandwiched between us and couldn't escape.

"Mind telling us your name?"

"Susan."

"Is that your first or last name?"

"First; my last name is Johansson."

"Well Susan Johansson, where have you been staying?"

"In our home in Rolla."

"And what were you doing out at the airport?"

"Looking for anything I might be able to salvage and trade for things I need."

"What might that be, besides food?"

"Well, I could use a better rifle; I wanted anything in .308 NATO."

"How did you get to the airport, it is 10 miles north of town?"

"I rode a bike. I couldn't find any running vehicles."

"Is that how you intended to get anything you salvaged back to Rolla?"

"I thought I could find a diesel powered pickup. It would have to be an automatic; I've never driven a stick shift."

"Were did you get the rifle?"

“It belonged to my husband, Swede.”

“Was he from Sweden?”

“No, he was from Indiana. His people immigrated between the first and second world wars. He was a traveling salesman, selling parts for farm implements. Things like nuts, bolts, and other hardware.”

“Where was he when the attacks came?”

“Kansas City.”

“So you took his rifle and pistol and went salvaging?”

“The rifle was his; the pistol was mine. I tried everything to get him to spend the money on a real rifle, like the ones the two of you have. He wasn't a prepper and I could only go so far on the available money. When we lost power, we lost everything. The food in the refrigerator began to warm and the freezer contents began to thaw. I put the stuff in a large cooler and picked up some blocks of ice. And then, I did what I could to improvise a shelter in the basement. Must have worked, I survived and have no symptoms of radiation poisoning.”

“You've seen our rifles; if you had a chance which one would you want?”

“They're both .308 NATO, aren't they?”

“Yes they are.”

“I probably go with the one, uh Harry has. It looks more like an assault rifle than yours. Yours looks like fancy hunting rifle.”

“Harry's rifle is an Austrian rifle, a STG-58, also known as a FAL. My rifle is an M1A, the civilian version of the M14 from the mid-50s until the mid-60s. However, they're still in service, make that were in service, because of their accuracy.”

“Is that the way it came, with the scope?”

“I added the scope and mounts plus a National Match flashhider with a bayonet lug. I'm using a combination bayonet/fighting knife. We're well equipped to deal with any little problem that might pop up.”

“What about a big problem popping up?”

“That could be more challenging, but we've taken our precautions. We're there; let Harry and I do the talking at first.”

“You going first or do you want me to?”

“I start the explanation and you can fill in anything I miss.”

“Better thee than me,” Harry smirked.

“Did you get the fuel?”

“Yes, we did. We also picked up a passenger.”

“So I see, flavor of the month?”

“Actually, Harry and I were about $\frac{2}{3}$ done filling the drum when a bullet whizzed by Harry’s ear. We shut down the pump and crawled under the Chevy. She fired 3 more shots including one so close to Harry he got some concrete chips in the face. I took one shot and grazed her but knocked her out. I recovered her rifle, a Russian sniper rifle from WW II and a Browning Hi-Power pistol.”

“Her name is Susan Johansson and her husband was in Kansas City when the attack started, so she’s newly widowed. I didn’t know what to do with her so we brought her back here for Sally and you to decide.”

“Why didn’t you just shoot her? You said she tried to shoot you?”

“I couldn’t just kill someone in cold blood. Why don’t you two talk to her while Harry and I unload the drums of kerosene?”

“You found kerosene?”

“Jet-A, same difference and we probably have a life time supply. Since it’s about the same thing as diesel, I’ll use PRI-D to stabilize it.”

“Bring the bimbo in and we’ll talk to her.” (Bimbo is a term that emerged in popular English language usage in the early 20th Century to describe an often attractive, yet unintelligent woman. The usage of this term began in the United States as early as 1919; similar to a *dumb* blond.)

The Other Shoe – Chapter 10

The drums of kerosene were heavy; 55-gallons at 6.82 pounds per gallon plus the weight of the drum. Pretty close to 400 pounds; fortunately, they roll. We put them in the greenhouse and added the pump to the first drum. We could pump the kerosene into a pail and use a funnel to fill the heater tank. One more project done and we had a large supply of Jet-A available; at least several tens of thousands of gallons. If it didn't warm up, we'd raise our garden in the greenhouse but cut back on the number of plants.

When Harry and I agreed that our wives had sufficient time to reach decision, we returned to the cabin. I expected icy stares. Instead, Lynn said, "We're glad you brought her back, she can help with the gardening and babysit the kids if all four of us have to leave."

"Uh, okay. Where are you going to put her up?"

"If Harry agrees, with Harry and Sally, we don't have the room and they do."

"Is that right Sally?"

"Uh-huh."

"You can give her the rifle and pistol back."

"I don't think so. Her rifle is an old Russian sniper rifle that must be about 80 years old. I'll give her one of the standard model M1As. She said she was looking for one when we ran into her."

"Then what was she doing at the Airport?"

"Salvaging to find things she could trade for a good rifle."

"I suppose I can find time to teach her to shoot the M1A, Hank."

"She was very good with the Mosin-Nagant. I'd really rather keep her at arm's length or further. Under the dirt, there's an attractive woman who is almost as pretty as you are."

"Think that one up on the drive back?"

"Yeah, but it is true."

Sally kept a close eye on Harry and Susan. There was no evidence of any interest between the two. Susan hung with Sally, only speaking to Harry when it was absolutely necessary. She spent most of her time either in the greenhouse or babysitting the kids so Lynn could have a break. Although spring came on the calendar, you sure couldn't

tell it by the weather. No snow on the ground, but plenty cold. We never had a chance to plant an outside garden and were forced to rely on the greenhouse.

We did all we could during the course of summer to locate livestock feed. They were always short day trips and we were home in time to tend to the livestock. We always drove the pickups and pulled the trailers. If we found some grain or hay, we'd load up what we could and bring it back. Once or twice, there was enough hay to require us to use the semi. One thing we could use, provided we could find one, was a grain trailer to haul the grain in. A grain trailer is like a box trailer without a top and not nearly as tall as a box trailer in most cases.

On days when we got busy, I didn't have a chance to keep my diary up to date. That's where I was now, trying to remember everything that had happened during the past two weeks. We had more feed than livestock. The grain had been hauled and piled on tarps and we'd gone back for more. It occurred to us that we could kill two birds with one stone, so we stopped and stacked the hay three layers deep around the grain. We draped traps over the hay down to the tarp the grain was piled on and filled in the hole we created with more grain. It was an economy of scale, the most feed in the smallest area.

As far as Susan goes, I still believe she thinks I was trying to grope her when I was checking her for guns. She stays well away from me. That makes Lynn happy so it makes me happy too. Someone took a pot shot at us at one of the locations where we found a small amount of hay but no grain. Whoever it was, must have taken off; we checked carefully and didn't find anyone, just an empty .270 cartridge case.

"Damn fine hunting cartridge, that .270. Shoots flat as a pancake at good ranges. Great sniper round."

"You sound like Jack O'Connor, Harry, he loved the .270."

"Of course for a military application, .30 caliber is better."

"They'll both kill you just as dead."

"Cept the .270 will do it quicker. Runs 'bout 3,200fps."

"Do you get along with Susan?"

"I suppose so, she mostly keeps to herself. She eats meals with us and there's usually conversation over meals. She seems to like doing the greenhouse work. Why?"

"She treats me like I have the plague. I'm half convinced she really believes I was groping her instead of checking her for a handgun."

"If you think that, you'd be wrong. Apparently, you remind her of her husband, Swede."

“Was that really his name, Swede?”

“I think it was a nickname but you know, I don’t think she has actually ever said what his name was. I’ve seen her practicing with that M1A you gave her. She’s better with it than she ever was with that Russian rifle.”

“I guess we should be thankful she didn’t find an M1A before she met us.”

o

It only got up to around 50°F the entire summer. Harry finally got Susan to open up a bit and Swede’s name was actually Norman. There were a few people in Licking, none in Edgar Springs and more up in Rolla. Jefferson City probably had the largest population but it was under 10,000. We hadn’t been to Springfield, but, like Jefferson City, it hadn’t been hit. If the pattern followed, there were maybe 15,000 alive in Springfield.

What it boiled down to that between the attacks and the aftermath, 90% of our population was gone. Air bursts produce less fallout and create a large damage pattern. Ground bursts create more fallout but have a smaller damage pattern. We weren’t about to go check out St. Louis to find out which method the Chinese and Russians used; the amount of fallout said all that needed to be said, *Ground Bursts and lots of them*.

That didn’t take into consideration diseases that may have broken out later like Cholera, Typhoid or Dysentery. We’d seen that some of those in Licking had survived only to leave shelter too soon, get radiation poisoning and die. Some had or would die in battles, either as the protagonist (hero) or the antagonist (MZB). Still others might simply starve.

We had the resources to prevent most of those things from happening; food, good water, a means of defense and location off the beaten path. We feared someone would spot us out on a salvaging mission and either kill us on the spot or worse, follow us back to the acreage, kill us and take our wives. For a time there we acted like we had an extra pair of eyes in the back of our heads. But, with the sole incident, we relaxed a bit. Besides, it wasn’t like we weren’t well equipped for a battle, should one happen.

Lynn and Susan wanted to make a trip to Licking and they wanted me to drive. When I asked why, Lynn said personal reasons. We went to Licking and I checked around town while they went shopping for clothing. I remembered I needed a good pair of boots, hopefully something better than the Wal-Mart specials I wore and found a Red Wing store. They had two pair nearly identical to the ones I wore and they were in my size. I got the boots and a bottle of mink oil to waterproof them. When I returned, they had completed their shopping and were waiting.

“I went shopping too.”

“Oh, what did you get?”

“Two pairs of Red Wing 2218 - Mens - 9-inch Logger work shoes.”

“No cowboy boots?”

“They had a pair in my size of the Red Wing Laramie 969 - Mens - 10-inch. Should I get them?”

“Are they cowboy boots?”

“I think they were motorcycle boots that looked like cowboy boots.”

“Let’s stop and get them before someone else does.”

“What did you gals find?”

“Some clothes for Susan.”

Since they were being closed mouth, I let it drop. We got the other boots and returned to the acreage. Harry and I spent the next month harvesting standing dead trees, doing a good job in our area of cleaning them out. We kept track of deadfalls and could harvest them later. When we finished, we must have had to 20 cords of hardwood cut, split and stacked. A month later Harry and I learned what our wives already knew; Susan was pregnant.

Norman and she had been married less than a year and this meant she’d end up being a single parent for quite some time, unless she found another man. And, she didn’t appear to be interested in looking. Sometime in September, she asked if Lynn and I would take her back to their home so she could recover some mementos.

When we pulled up to the house, I noticed smoke coming from the chimney. I took my Mossberg and a bandoleer of buckshot, just in case. Susan unlocked the door to the house and as we entered we realized that there was a fire in the fireplace.

“Stay here, let me check it out.”

After checking the downstairs I slipped up the stairs as quietly as I could. In what I took to be the bedroom, there was a man sleeping in the bed. I moved closer and nudged his foot with the shotgun. He started to come around and the first thing he said was, “Who the hell are you and what are you doing in my house?”

“Your house? What’s your name?”

“Norman Johansson but my friends call me Swede.”

“No shit. Man you’d better get dressed quick, I have a surprise for you. By the way, I’m Hank Brown.”

More curious than anything else Swede got dressed and we went downstairs. There was a squeal of pure delight and Susan ran to him smothering him in kisses and hugs. She finally disengaged and told him to get some clothes around while she gathered up a few things. He was either too surprised or so happy; he didn’t question her, just got a suitcase.

“Hank, I have some things in the garage.”

“Yeah, Like what?”

“I call it my just in case stuff. There are totes of LTS foods, seeds, fertilizer, diesel and gasoline. I also have a small portable generator, 12kw, diesel fueled.”

“Was the Mosin-Nagant rifle yours?”

“One of my older guns, yes. I let Susan use it and she didn’t know about the other guns I had put up.”

“What do you have?”

“I have a FAL, a HK91, a M1A, 3 PT1911s, two Remington 11-87Ps and a Ruger 10/22.”

“You have two M1As now; I gave one to Susan to use.”

“She’ll return it and I’ll give her my M1A. I prefer the HK91.”

“How did you manage to keep you gun collection secret?”

“I had it before we married and I never brought it up. I gave her the Russian rifle and the Browning, just in case. She knew about my .45 and HK but didn’t know where they were stored.”

“We’re going to need to find you a travel trailer. My friend Harry has one and might know where we can get another.”

“Then, I take it we’re not staying in town?”

“It’s not a good idea and Susan works for us now so we’ll have to provide housing. We could always use another rifleman on the acreage and someone to help with the gardening if it ever gets warm enough to grow a garden.”

“I suppose you’re wondering how I got here.”

“I’m curious, but you don’t have to explain unless you want to.”

“Do you know the expression shank’s mare?”

“You walked?”

“All 250 plus miles. I holed up in a subbasement of a building on the outskirts of Kansas City. I figured being so close to ground zero would mean the radiation was higher than normal. I have a NukAlert but never really trusted it. Anyway I stayed down there, going up occasionally to the basement storeroom for the cafeteria they had. Do you know how much bottled water a cafeteria goes through in one day? They had pallet loads of water. Most of the cans of goods were those huge gallon sized cans, but I made do, opening them with my Swiss Army Knife.”

“Anyway, I stayed down there until my NukAlert suggested it was okay to leave. I put together a supply of food and water to take with me, just in case. I couldn’t find a useable vehicle so I limited the food to what I could carry and headed home.”

“And, you crossed 250 miles of rural Missouri without any problems?”

“I had my share of problems, that’s for sure. Susan doesn’t know it but I have a CCW and carry a Walther PPK in .380 with spare magazines. I first stayed on state highways assuming it would be the shortest way home. I had a minor incident with a guy confronting me and switched to secondary roads. My NukAlert chirped only a little when I left and the further south I went, the less it chirped. I made it home in about 15 days. Susan was gone and I didn’t know where to look for her. What with me being a closet prepper, I knew that the only weapons she had were the Hi-Power and the Mosin-Nagant. Thanks for taking care of her.”

“Save your thanks until you talk to her and find out how we met.”

We got Susan, Swede and their things back to the acreage. Considering he was a closet prepper and had managed to hide his preps from his wife, he had done well. Most had been acquired before Susan and he were married.

“Harry, Norman. Norman, Harry.”

“This mean we get our trailer back?”

“If we can find one like it for Norman and Susan.”

“Jefferson City. They always had a bunch in stock. We’ll put ‘em up for tonight and go shopping tomorrow.”

“Anyplace else sell them?”

“Probably Springfield.”

Jefferson City was 82 miles; Springfield was 114 miles over some of the same roads we had to drive to get to Jefferson City. The next day we headed out for Jeff City. On the way up, I finally learned what that shopping trip was all about.

“Not only did I find Susan alive and healthy, we’re expecting a baby.”

“I think I may have taken Lynn and Susan shopping for maternity clothes.”

“You knew?”

“No, they were pretty tight lipped. Did she explain what happened at the airport?”

“Yes she did. I told her what she did was wrong and that you were salvaging, not looting. I also told her she was lucky you didn’t kill her. If your shot had been one inch to the left...I shudder to think about it.”

“I didn’t scope the windage right or I would have hit right where I aimed. I’m glad I didn’t but don’t kid yourself she’s one heck of a marksman.”

“That’s the place over there.”

“Are we here already? I guess Norman and I got involved in a discussion.”

“Hank, it is Swede to my friends.”

“I’m your friend after almost killing you wife and groping her?”

“You didn’t kill her even if you tried. You did what I would have in an identical situation. I don’t blame Susan or you for what happened and it was a good object lesson for her.”

“The third one down the line is exactly the same as the one that Sally and I have; if that’s what you want, we can pick up some of the conversions we made to ours and load them in your pickup. And then we can hook onto the travel trailer and pull it back to Edgar Springs.”

We found a similar wood stove to heat the trailer, picked up more 100# propane bottles and added some furniture. We also added the combo stacked laundry pair with a propane dryer. We had time and looked around to see if we could find a grocery store that hadn’t been emptied. The one we found had very little, but it gave us a supply of spices, bottles of yeast and the back room had some laundry soap. Washing diapers would come back when we ran out of the disposables. We got a diaper bag, 8 dozen cloth diapers, pins, and A&D ointment for when the bottoms got sore and a small assortment of baby clothing, running from newborn to 6 months of age. A drug store provided a large

supply of prenatal vitamins. The way kids grew, the clothes we had for our four could be shared if necessary.

When we got back, we leveled the travel trailer and extended the pullouts. We connected water with a hose like we'd started out with Harry and Sally and would connect sewer the following day. Finally we went into the cave and brought out a selection of our LTS foods to stock the trailer.

So far we'd been lucky and hadn't seen a living soul out near the acreage. We were 6 adults of varying age from twenties, thirties and fifties in age. We did produce food on a continuing basis in the greenhouse, but not enough to share. I'm not sure what we'd have done if somebody asked; I believe I've said that before.

o

On a bright cool morning we took our rifles out and practiced. Just because we hadn't had trouble up until now didn't mean we wouldn't in the future. Local survivors would be out looking for food, probably spreading out from where they lived. Since nobody had been to any of the communities offering food and no state or federal aid had been forthcoming, Harry and I agreed that sooner or later, we'd need to use the military equipment we'd picked up.

We went out hunting, as much to measure how much wildlife had survived as get more meat. We weren't really that badly off, plenty of pork, a full beef, 3 dozen frozen chickens, frozen fish and rabbits. We moved the rabbit/worm/fish setup into the greenhouse so it would continue to produce when it really got cold.

Harry had done the modifications to their travel trailer by himself so he was our expert on making the conversions to the new home for Swede and Susan. They didn't really take all that long, putting a hole through roof for the stove and installing flashing, adding the washer/dryer combo and adding water and gas lines. We didn't need to replace the generator when we got to looking at it; it was a Quiet Diesel by Cummings and had a maximum output of 104amps at 120v. Its fuel tank was small, 50 gallons, about enough for 48 hours at full load. However it had a fuel pump to pump fuel from an alternative source. We hooked it into the big tank.

Susan was more than earning her keep, working endless hours in the greenhouse planting, cultivating, harvesting fruit and vegetables and harvesting heirloom seeds. In the time she had before the baby interfered with her work, she'd more than double our seed supply. Around 8 months, she could no longer do it and Sally and Lynn took turns taking over her duties. Norman hadn't said if he had any military service, but based on his selection of firearms, I began to suspect he did.

"What branch of service were you in Swede?"

"Special Operations."

“What, SEALs, Special Forces, Rangers, or Force Recon?”

“Army Special Forces.”

“Green Beret?”

“Well, that was the color of our beret. We didn’t wear it a hell of a lot. Most of us preferred boonie hats. I did one tour in Iraq and a second in Afghanistan.”

“Are you still serving your reserve requirement?”

“I was supposed to be, but I couldn’t find anyone to hook up with.”

“Harry was a Ranger and I was Marine Infantry.”

“Two chiefs and one Indian, huh?”

“That’s one way to look at it. We did the usual PAW salvaging. We got M240s, M2HBs, M72 LAWs, and all kinds of different hand grenades. We also found M18A1 Claymores. We went up to Kansas City and loaded up on ammo at the Lake City ammo plant. We also got fuel, mostly diesel, but have a tanker full of gasoline. We needed kerosene for our heater in the greenhouse and decided Jet A would suffice. That’s what we were doing when we ran into Susan. Our propane tank has a wet leg and can refill your bottles. As you can see by looking around, we have a lot of fuel. We hadn’t planned on having a third trailer and we’re going to have to harvest more firewood.”

“What do you think of the weather? I don’t recall it ever being this cold.”

“I think it’s a nuclear winter; however, we haven’t had any snow. Basically I don’t know what to think, but north of I-70 there’s snow on the ground and a fairly large amount.”

“I walked through some flurries on my way home but it was isolated and didn’t amount to much. About halfway home, I walked out of it. Have you lived here a long time?”

“Not really. I worked for Costco in St. James up near St. Louis. I had purchased the property primarily because of the cave. It had septic but no well. I added the well, the ice house and the smoke house. Most of my efforts were spent on improving the cave. I lived in it until I got my cabin built.”

“How much help did you have doing that?”

“The cabin? None. I’ve never complained but sometimes wondered if it was worth the labor required. I met Lynn when I was working for a company in Licking. She didn’t date and the other men called her the *Ice Queen*. I found an opening and introduced myself by asking a simple question something like, *what kind of cowboy guns did she use?*”

“It was a short courtship and we had a simple wedding on a Saturday morning at the Methodist Church in Licking. Her mother was a twin and apparently it passed to her. We ended up going from no children to 4 children in 15 months, all in diapers. Only now are Chuck and Cindy potty trained. They still have accidents, but overall are doing pretty good.”

“Does she have family in Licking?”

“Her dad ran off when she was a child and her mother died before the war from cancer. She’s never mentioned other relatives.”

“How long have you been a survivalist?”

“Since before Y2K. How about you?”

“I had the firearms before I went into the Army but didn’t start accumulating food until I got out. I put my enlistment bonus in a CD with a good interest rate and spent it all on food and supplies as soon as I got out. Not long after, I met Susan and based on some of her comments, kept my preparations to myself. I left a letter marked ‘open only in case of my death’ laying it all out. I forgot to mention the firearms, but thought if something happened she’d find them. Apparently she never looked.”

“When do think the MZBs will show up?”

“Hard to say, you’re really off the beaten path. Unfortunately you’re on a road and they’ll probably go up and down every road looking. Too many out there were unprepared for anything from a tornado to WWII.”

“I make the casualties at 90%. Fatalities I’m not sure, but most of that 90% would die without adequate medical care. They hit so many cities, it is mind boggling.”

“What is under the tarps down towards the road?”

“Machineguns; M2HB and M240.”

“Salvage?”

“Fort Leonard Wood. We’re well equipped, LAWs rockets, hand grenades and Claymores.”

“Why don’t you have them set up down by the entrance? You could rig up a trip wire and detonate them that way.”

“We haven’t had enough people to have someone guarding the entrance fulltime. I’m afraid your wife and I got off on a bad footing and I haven’t dared to ask her. Plus we have two sets of twins in diapers and have mostly just been getting by.”

“But with a tripwire...”

“We might blowup a friendly. Lord knows how few have survived the attack and the aftermath. We simply can’t afford to kill anyone who might be on our side.”

“How many people does it take to have someone on duty, in say 8 hour shifts, 24/7?”

“I read somewhere that it took four.”

“And before I showed up you had 5 people; why didn’t you set up the guard?”

“We had to do salvaging for our long term survival. Now we’re pretty much done with that so a guard force is possible. Everyone here is relatively proficient with one or more weapons so if we had one person on guard duties he or she could raise a warning on the FRS radio.”

“So no more salvaging?”

“I didn’t say that. We’ve located long term supplies of things we need on an ongoing basis and can go after more when they’re needed. Things like propane, diesel fuel and gasoline. I must say we probably have a lifetime supply of stabilized gasoline.”

“You have weapons and mentioned Lake City so should I assume you have enough ammo?”

“We probably have more than we need. But there are some things you can never have too much of.”

“So you’re well stocked on toilet paper? What about cigarettes?”

“Marlboro’s and Kool 100s.”

“Do we need more?”

“It might not be a bad idea. It won’t require a special trip; we get them in Jefferson City.”

Finding Susan’s husband had strained credulity. It had been a long trek and he’d had so little with him to make it. Perhaps it was his love for Susan that was his source of energy. Our main problem, from my view, was our small numbers; too few to really handle a large group of attackers and too many to avoid being noticed. We had force multipliers, true; did we have enough? Some common force multipliers are:

- Morale
- Technology
- Geographical features
- Weather
- Recruitment through diplomacy
- Training and experience
- Feared units
- Deception

We were in fairly good spirits, having been successful in providing for future needs. Lynn had the babies without any problems. We had machineguns, grenades, rockets and a very large supply of ammo. The lot ran north to south with the road being on the south side. Our only geographical advantage was the upslope from the road. It also made all of the physical facilities clearly visible from the road, except for the cave. The weather was beyond our control, with continuing cold. Our recruitment had consisted of taking Susan prisoner and inviting her husband to join when he finally showed up.

Training and experience would be our long suit. One Marine, one Ranger and one Special Forces represented a well-trained force, if we could learn to blend our skills. All of us had some combat action, somewhere. Nobody feared us because nobody knew we were here, or so we hoped. Neither fear nor deception would be much of a factor. An example of deception was George Patton's phony Army leading up to Normandy. The German's were afraid of Patton and convinced that he, being our most aggressive General, would lead the D-Day invasion. The movie got that part right.

There are some out there that think that George was the best thing since sliced bread, as far as a military commander. I think I probably quoted him earlier in my diary. He called the M1 Garand called it *the greatest implement of battle ever devised*. The BM-59 and the M-14 were improvements on the Garand. The former had a system which allowed it to be fired in full auto and not shoot the moon. The latter was our version of the same and available as a semi-auto, for what amounted to a fortune.

Beretta developed an innovative barrel-mounted tri-compensator to solve two problems associated with full-automatic fire: heavy recoil during firing and the wide spread of the bullets that result from the upward rise of the barrel while firing. Operational testing showed the tri-compensator gave smaller bullet patterns during automatic firing. In either full-auto or semi-auto firing, the tri-compensator effectively reduced muzzle flash.

Tri-compensators came in detachable (for parachutists) and fixed versions. Most, but not all, tri-compensators were adaptable to rifle grenades: but a different gas cylinder necessitated a non-US standard bayonet. A gas spindle valve, operated by erecting a grenade-launcher sight mount, redirected the gases from the gas cylinder to the muzzle in order to launch grenades. Beretta also produced a finely machined sight for indirect grenade launching. In full-automatic fire, various BM59 models had a theoretical firing rate of 750- to 810-rounds per minute. However, given the time required to replace

empty magazines, the cyclic rate was still about 400-rounds per minute – still a substantial firepower increase over the Garand.

I think that Patton would have like the M-14 just fine. I also believe that he wouldn't have allowed it be produced until the US either licensed the Beretta System or solved the problem some other way. The M-14 ended up being more like the M1918 BAR than intended. The BAR, too, had a problem staying on target. Probably the people who got the most use from the BAR were Bonnie and Clyde. But, that character in John Ross's story *Unintended Consequences* used one for shooting targets out of the air. Remember, it was fiction.

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"All things considered, we're in fair shape."

"I don't know, Harry, we could always have someone show up and try to clean us out."

"How much traffic was there on your road before the war?"

"Almost none. Mostly people going into the Mark Twain Forrest."

"So a few, right?"

"There were always a few. Only had trouble one time and that ended badly."

"That guy you shot?"

"Yes. He was going for a gun. I don't understand why he was so angry. I guess because he didn't win the court case. I thought I was going to lose my PT1911 over that deal."

"We haven't talked a lot about the war. What triggered it?"

"The world economy. More than that, I don't know; you'd have to ask an economist or a history teacher. You saw how it started, India and Pakistan. We're just lucky we had plenty of notice."

"We won't get any notice if some survivor thinks they need what's here more than we do."

"That's why we have the force multipliers."

"There's a limit to that."

"Don't I know it? Then again, Swede and you were special ops."

"We weren't that much different; it was mostly advanced training. We didn't really learn to shoot anything that we didn't already know how to shoot. At best, we became more proficient. You, however, were a Marine and, what's the saying, *Every Marine's a Rifleman?*"

"This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life. Without me my rifle is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than the enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will. My rifle and I know that what counts in war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, or the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit.

"My rifle is human, even as I am human, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strengths, its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready, even as I am clean and ready. We will become part of each other.

"Before God I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life.

"So be it, until victory is America's and there is no enemy."

"What's that?"

"It's The Marine Corps Rifleman's Creed."

"So, do you sleep with your rifle?"

"No, I sleep with my wife. However, my rifle is never far from reach."

"Figures. I knew the market meltdown could lead to war, hell many of us did. But it wasn't the market that started the war, it was India and Pakistan."

"It was the market, Harry. In those days before the war, grain couldn't be exported to feed the starving masses because nobody would take letters of credit. The price of oil fell like a bad rocket; didn't do much at the pump, if you'll recall. We're lucky to have survived at all."

"I'm glad we found Swede, upped our firepower measurably."

"Right, by $\frac{1}{3}$."

"Why not by one-sixth?"

"Someone has to watch the kids. Since Susan is expecting, it means that Lynn and Sally can help us and Susan can watch the kids. Make it 20%."

“They probably won’t roll in here bold as brass and attack. I know I wouldn’t.”

“You’re assuming that they already knew we were here. It’s just as likely they’ll come down the road, spot us and keep on rolling. Then, they could stop, come back and reconnoiter. Once they did that, they could attack from any direction.”

“But we’d see them first and be ready.”

“That would only happen if we’re running a guard operation 24/7; which, at the moment, we aren’t.”

“Maybe we should,” Swede suggested. “We might not need to do it forever, but so soon after, I think we should. We could split it into 8 hour shifts and just we three do it. It wouldn’t be much different from a farmer with livestock who is pretty much tied to his place. That would let us set up the Claymore mines, too.”

“This may sound crazy, what with me being the mad hermit with the cave, but I think we should add more people. We wouldn’t have growing area for anything more than the greenhouse and garden, but still...”

“Right, we need a recruiting program.”

“And, if we could find a few preppers, so much the better.”

“Hell, I settle for some veterans.”

“Good point. Where would we look? Can’t just open up the Yellow Pages to *Survivalists*, now can we?”

“Any special qualifications?”

“They have their own weapons/ammo and are married. They should have some supplies although they may be short on those.”

“What kind of weapons?”

“NATO standard calibers, 7.62×51mm or 5.56×45mm.”

“Any branch of service?”

“I suppose. I prefer people with an infantry background; we don’t have catapults or aircraft.”

“We could use a good comms man.”

The discussion continued for several hours. We decided on a guard program to run until the threat diminished or we found more people. We knew where we could get more travel trailers, Jefferson City. We decided to get the trailers first and see to their installation on the theory that having places ready to go might help with our recruiting. The well was plenty good and the septic oversized. We could find and install more propane and/or diesel, as required. Finishing off the additions to the trailers to incorporate amenities like a wood burning stoves for heat, compact washer and dryer and perhaps freezers wasn't beyond the realm of possibility. More food might be hard to come by. The same could be said for medical supplies.

We'd talked about it enough, it was time to get off our duffs and implement what we'd discussed. First we'd have to run it by our wives, something this far reaching couldn't be decided unilaterally. It also gave them an opportunity to make some shopping lists for our future needs.

1. Freezers
2. Generators
3. Adult work clothing
4. Medical supplies
5. Additional feminine hygiene supplies
6. Additional children's clothing/diapers
7. Additional fuel storage
8. Canning supplies

There were no priorities to their list and we could do that later. The trailer we got for Swede and Susan was the third one down in a row of six very large trailers. We could add the other five and a week of trips to the Capital would see that we had everything we needed to install and set them up. The things on the list might be harder to come by, or not. We hadn't been to Springfield, yet, and didn't know what we might find there. If we wanted booze, there was always Branson.

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"Looks like snow."

"You think so? We'd better hurry up the underground installations. How long to have all of the trailers converted?"

"Three weeks, why?"

"Time enough to get propane tanks and get them hooked in. Diesel tanks seem to be hard to come by."

"If we could get one large tank, we could hook them all to the same tank."

"Those new gas station tanks we saw," Swede and I echoed.

“That’s what I had in mind fellas.”

“How big were they?”

“About 10,000; but there were two.”

“Can we get by with above the ground if we use a berm?”

“Wouldn’t recommend it. We can use the backhoe and half bury them and then use the dirt to cover them.”

It took a month before we finished. We had space for five additional families and the only thing we lacked was enough food. We’d filled the wish list to the best of our ability. Our two oldest were now potty trained taking some strain off Lynn. Susan had a green thumb and was producing more in the greenhouse than we thought possible. Sally hadn’t been feeling well and absent a doctor, we didn’t have a clue what might be wrong.

“Do you think we could find a doctor in Jefferson City?”

“We won’t know until we look, Harry. We should go there anyway and see if anyone missed any food we could use to fill in the holes.”

“Tomorrow?”

“Leave early, say 8am?”

“Works for me, I’ll tell Sally.”

“Lynn do you think we could get Susan to watch the kids tomorrow?”

“What’s up?”

“Sally hasn’t been feeling well and we’re going to Jeff City to find a doctor. We need to look around for whatever on your list we didn’t get and some food stuffs we’re getting low on.”

“What are we low on?”

“Cigarettes and coffee to name two plus other basic staples; wheat, corn, and other grains we can grind for consumption, plus rice and beans.”

“Where would you look?”

“Grain elevators first, health food stores second, feed places last. From what we’ve seen, the regular grocery stores are empty.”

“Are we critically low on anything?”

“Just the cigarettes and coffee. I almost wish I hadn’t taken up smoking again, but it helps with the stress.”

“I thought we were well prepared, what stress?”

“Things have changed. For example, we’re going to the Capital hoping to find a doctor for Sally. We’re depending upon what we grow far more than what we can buy or salvage. Sooner or later, someone is going to come down that road, spot our setup and attack us to get what we have. Our newborns haven’t been vaccinated against any of the standard diseases. There’s nothing to prevent one of the adults from being exposed to something and bringing it back.”

“I was worried about that too.”

“See what I mean? Things are very different. What if Sally has something seriously wrong with her? Can it be treated or will she die for lack of treatment?”

“All we can do is put one foot in front of the other and keep marching, Hank. I’ll go ask Susan to watch the kids tomorrow.”

“Ready to go?”

“More than ready. Sally is really off her feed today.”

“Sorry you aren’t feeling well Sally, Lynn will ride in back with you in case you need something.”

“I figured we’d just ask around for a doctor. There still have to be a few around the Capital.”

“Lynn and I are going to try and fill in loose ends while you’re with the doctor. If you finish early, call me on channel 30. If we finish early we go back to where we dropped you off.”

When we arrived we asked around and located a doctor. Sally told him her symptoms and he seemed very concerned. Lynn and I left to do you shopping/salvaging. We found smokes in a bonded warehouse of all places. We found several cases of coffee in the back room of a grocery store that everyone had overlooked. We only came up with beans and rice in the stables department. Harry hadn’t called and we went back to where we dropped them off. There was no one around and I called him on the radio.

“Harry, we’re done, where are you?”

“Capital Regional, 1125 Madison St.”

“Give us a bit.”

“No hurry, they’re doing an ultra sound.”

“Ultra sound?”

“Yeah, they can’t use their MRI.”

“Did Sally say anything to you Lynn?”

“Sally’s always been a rather private person, Hank. She doesn’t engage in the usual girl talk. She did mention abdominal pain once or twice, but that could have been anything.”

When we arrived at the large hospital we had a time finding Harry and Sally. When we did, Sally wasn’t present and Harry was talking to someone, presumably a doctor. Harry was trembling and as pale as a ghost. He crashed in a chair like he’d been unable to support his own weight.

“Is it serious, Harry?”

“Stage IIIc Uterine sarcoma and it has metastasized to both the pelvic and para-aortic lymph nodes.”

“But surely they can operate.”

“Not only can’t they operate, they lack the chemicals for chemotherapy. Radiation therapy is out in this instance, according to the specialist from the cancer center.”

“Did they say how long?”

“Not that long, not with her being at stage IIIc.”

“And you had no clue?”

“About 25 years ago, she had radiation therapy for a benign tumor. The doctor seemed to think that had a bearing on this.”

“How is she?” Lynn asked.

“Seems resigned to her fate, but I suspect she’s more upset than she’s letting on. Not to change the subject, but that cuts our defense by the 20% Swede added.”

“We don’t need to talk about that now.”

“Yes, we do. We should just put a note on the bulletin boards and ask, *Any Preppers around? If you’d like to improve your situation, see Hank or Harry at the Library in Licking.* At least it won’t tell them where we are.”

“Right and they’d have to have some capabilities to get to Licking.”

“Ideally, we could attract a small MAG that wasn’t quite ready.”

“Not ready in what way?”

“They had individual supplies but no bug out location other than the National Forest.”

“What makes you think they’d see the bulletin board?”

“Probably doing the same things we are, including salvaging from Jefferson City.”

Sally came out of the examination room. She’d obviously been crying and looked like she’d been hit by a bus. Lynn comforted her and Harry and I got a scratch pad from a nurse and wrote up several identical notes which we posted at various locations around Jefferson City. We put one at the fuel terminal.

We returned home and shared what we learned. But there was no joy in Mudville – mighty Casey had struck out. Harry and I cornered Swede and explained about the notes. He didn’t think much of the idea, but at least we hadn’t brought them here. He obviously realized the implication of Sally’s illness, but kept silent beyond extending sympathies. We agree to wait 3 days before we started to send someone to the library every day. Swede would go too and say Hank and Harry sent him. He could call us on the ham radio in the truck and we could be there in about 45 minutes.

Should they have someone on watch, they would likely assume we’d come from the National Forest or someplace north on US 63. We could really throw them a curve by taking H to Lenox and C to the east side of Licking. With a 45 minute travel time, we’d have to wait before we left to maintain the illusion. We were in our third week of hanging out at the library when two men showed up.

“You Hank?”

“No, I’m Swede, Hank and Harry sent me. I can call them on the radio and they can be here in about 45 minutes.”

“Hold on before you do, tell us a little bit before we bother them.”

“Hank owns the place and it is small, about 6 acres with septic, well, generators, some solar heated water and some PV panels. There are lots of salvaged fuel and supplies.

We have five empty travel trailers, 40' jobs modified for wood heat and so forth. All of the new trailers run off the same 2 10,000-gallon diesel tanks with totally stabilized fuel. Our greenhouse is 20' by 40', 800ft²."